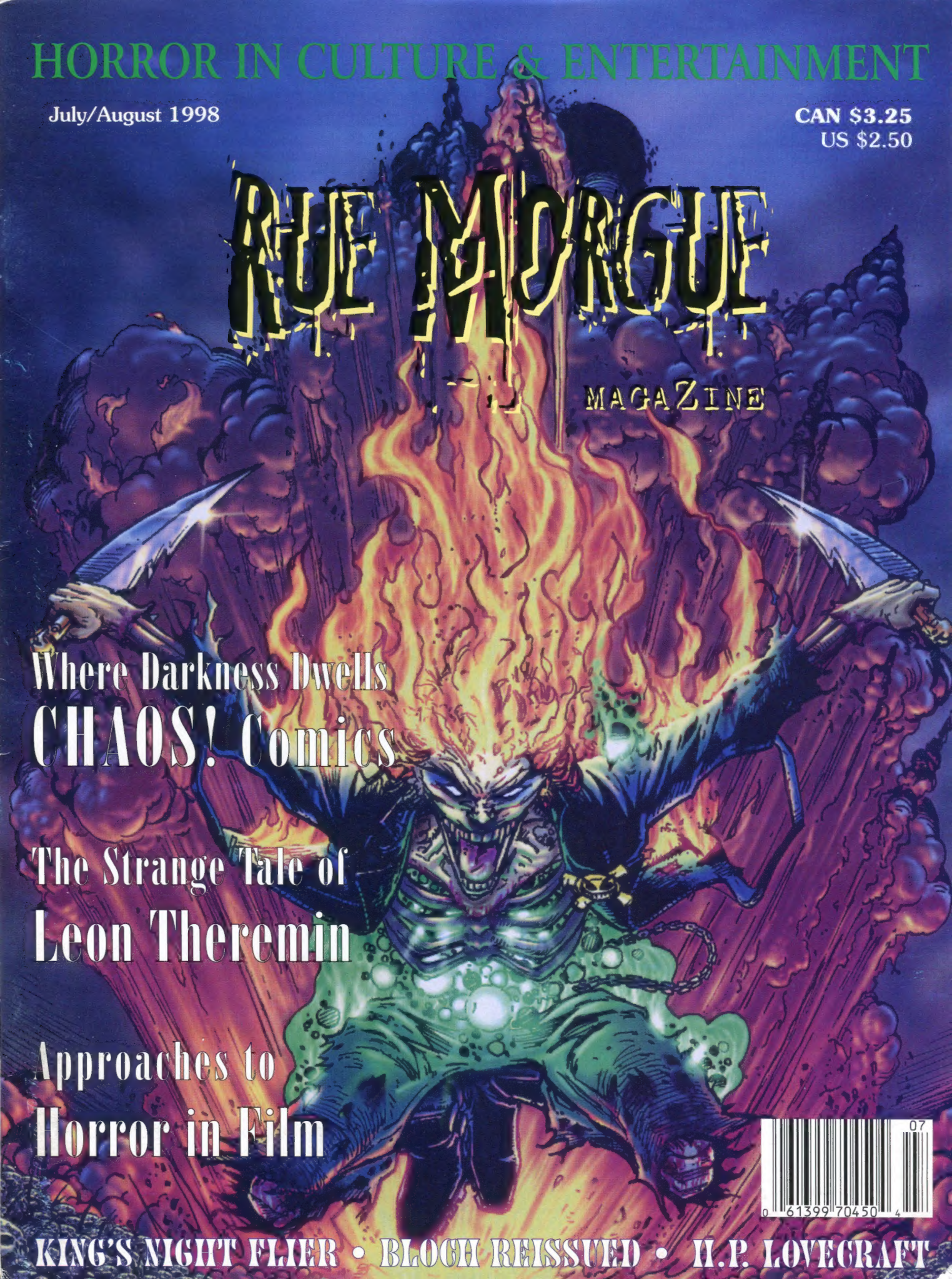
HORROR IN CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT

July/August 1998

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# RUE MORGUE

MAGAZINE



Where Darkness Dwells
CHAOS! Comics

The Strange Tale of
Leon Theremin

Approaches to
Horror in Film

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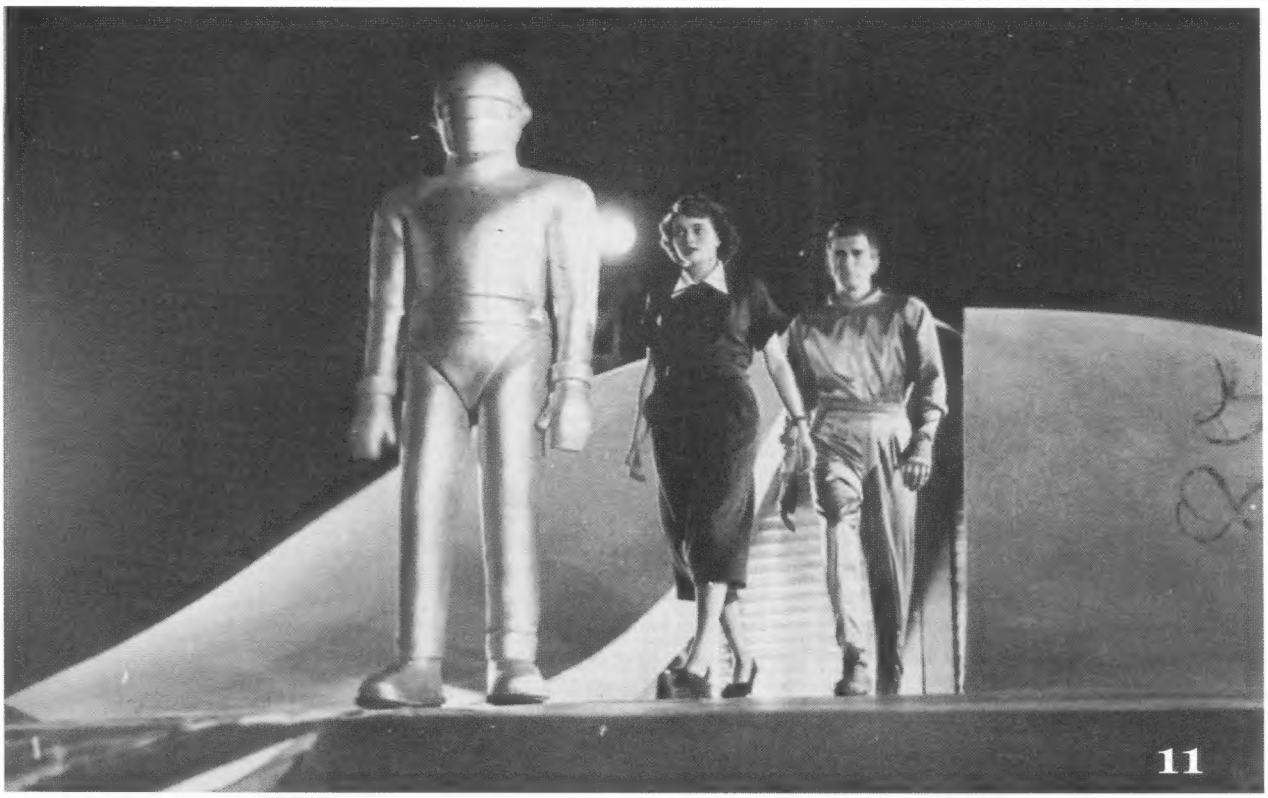




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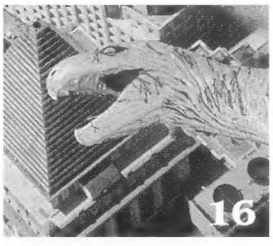
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# Note From Underground

#4

*"Where there is no imagination, there is no horror."*
-Sherlock Holmes

It's no surprise that the arrival of *Godzilla* in theatres last month was greeted with universal derision (Gary Butler's comprehensive take on that event appears on page 17 of this issue). Somehow, it wasn't surprising at all to see that Godzilla 1998 would be about as memorable as watching a dead lizard in biology class. It's too bad; the original 1954 Godzilla, silly and self-indulgent as it may have been, captured the imagination of millions of viewers with its wholesale destruction of cities at the hands of mythological, gigantic monsters. It became an icon for the Japanese, who originally gave it life as a kind of memorial to the atomic bomb which had razed their cities just ten years before.

The original Godzilla was fluff, but it scratched at a scar that still itched and, god knows, maybe that is why that oversized lizard endured as long as it did. But its younger brother is an exercise in pointlessness, made more so by two offerings of the same type that preceded it – Spielberg size, in case anyone could have missed them. But pointlessness has all but become the mantra for feature film horror. Offerings like *Deep Rising*, *Anaconda* and *Species II* are all like *Godzilla* in this respect; they want the horror to be as commercial as possible, and assume that making a movie around special effects is going to do the trick.

On television, of course, things are somewhat different. While major releases blow millions trying to make a memorable dent, television enjoys a golden age of horror with shows like *The X-Files*, *Millennium*, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* and *The Outer Limits*. Unlike the feature film EVENT that happens once and counts for all time, television has to re-interest audiences on a weekly basis. Obviously, it's going to take more than special effects to do that.

In fact, the boob tube has been pretty discerning when it comes to horror. From Rod Serling's original *Twilight Zone* to HBO's *Tales From the Crypt*, there's a certain artistry there that shines even through the bad episodes. Maybe it's because TV writers live by the law that there has to be an inexhaustible fount of inspiration when it comes to horror; parapsychology, government cover-ups, shady characters, aliens, golems, vampires, witches, true, not-so-true and ambivalently true stories — it's all good, whether its campy, dark or really frightening.

This month, we will see *The X-Files* finally hit the big screen after seven seasons of developing a Tolkien-sized mythology in short, forty-five minute segments. From the previews, we are led to believe that Chris Carter and the producers behind the show want to make the ultimate X-File, the one that's going to count for all time. It's probably not going to happen, even if the film isn't a box office failure, which it probably won't be. But the mental switch is there: television to feature film - story to special effects.

Along with *X-Files*, there is a lot of box-office horror planned for the future; hopefully there will be something that will fire our imaginations, but most of it probably won't. Horror fans will still go out and see it, maybe even enjoy it, but most of it will play second fiddle to the stuff they watch at home, even if they don't realise it. Big budget special effects, you see, are impressive, but they don't abide; only stories do that. And right now, as far as horror entertainment is concerned, the place where we find most of the stories is on television. The truth is out there.

**-RG**

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# POST-MORTEM

Questions
Comments
Criticism




R.I.P.

Issue #3 May/June 1998

### Floria and Marilyn

It was nice to see an article on Floria Sigismondi in your horror magazine. I am a big fan of her videos and never thought of them as horrific though I guess they are in many ways. It would have been interesting to see an interview with Marilyn Manson though, since he seems to love all that stuff you guys write about.

Name withheld on request

*We had in fact secured an interview with Manson for our debut issue but he cancelled all media appearances after one of his shows was banned in Alberta. We eventually decided to run the piece on Sigismondi because she has, in the meantime, developed into a celebrity in her own right and, as you noted, her work has affiliations with the genre. For the record, we will try to secure an interview with the elusive (and illusive) Manson during his next publicity run through the country.*

### Splatter Matter

I'm not sure if I understood your editorial ("Note From Underground" RM#3) where you say that "perhaps Hollywood itself is in the midst of its own great age of splatter." I've seen the films you mentioned (*Die Harder*, *Air Force One* and *Con Air*) and I didn't see much splatter in them.

George Marks
Ottawa

*In their consummate desire to showcase gore effects, splatter films partake in a type of movie making that favours spectacle over anything else. It is in this sense that I referred to the above movies (and to Hollywood in general) as partaking of splatter, since they too show an affinity for this approach to filmmaking.*

### Hard to Find Videos

Some of the videos which you review in your magazine are very hard to get. Can you consider printing where these videos are available?

Thank you,
Angie Haick
Toronto

*That's a good idea which we will implement whenever we review hard to find movies. Any release without a particular address, however, should be available at (or may be ordered through) your local video store. Regarding our last issue; if, by chance, you were referring to Herschell Gordon Lewis' films (*Blood Feast, Color Me Blood Red *and* The Gore Gore Girls*), they are available from Something Weird Video at PO Box 33664 Seattle WA 98133; phone 206-361-3759.*

### Pages & Pricing

I saw your magazine at Suspect Video the other day and liked the way you have developed it since the first issue. Your movie reviews don't miss a beat and your interview with Tom Savini was timely. My only quibble is that the magazine is not long enough. Any plans to expand the content in the near future?

Regards,
Brian Knudsen
Toronto

*Plans are underway to develop the magazine and add more pages. Growth, however, will be gradual since we are still relatively young and horror in Canada is under represented at an industry level. But that is changing and, once again, you can expect some growth with each subsequent issue.*

I saw a description of *Rue Morgue Magazine* listed in *Psychotronic* magazine #27 and I would like a copy of #1. There was no price listed — is it free or did they accidentally leave a price out? Anyway, hope you're still publishing,

Harland Ronning
Saskatoon

*Copies for* Rue Morgue Magazine *issues #1 and #2 are available for the price of postage (ninety cents Canadian) while supplies last and are complimentary with a year subscription to the magazine.*

### Want Us to Publish Your Story? Read This

Please consider my short story "The Light In The Window" for publication in *Rue Morgue Magazine*. I hope you will enjoy the story and find it pertinent to your magazine.

Tim Walters
Toronto

*We have printed this letter as a message to budding writers to stop sending in their stories.* Rue Morgue Magazine *does not publish fiction and will not consider these type of submissions.*

### Correction

Our last issue mistakenly credited the upcoming *Bride of Chucky* movie to MGM Film Distribution ("Chucky to Wed in Toronto?" - Dreadlines/RM#3). In fact, Universal Studios is handling the release. *Rue Morgue* regrets the error.

**LETTERS POLICY**

We encourage readers to send their comments via mail or e-mail. Letters may be edited for length and/or content. Please send to *morgue@istar.ca* or: POST MORTEM c/o Rue Morgue Magazine 199 Avenue Road #534, Toronto ON M5R 2J3 - CANADA

# Dreadlines

## News Highlights

## Can't Take No Putrefaction



Argento on set.

It's a little known fact that when bassist **Bill Wyman** left **The Rolling Stones**, the world's greatest rock and roll band might have lost its most versatile member. Since his departure from the Stones in 1994, Wyman has released a best-selling autobiography, hosted a television documentary series on the history of blues, put out a new album and even managed to open a chain of restaurants in Britain. Even more astonishing is that Wyman had been pursuing outside interests during his 31 years with the Stones, which included scoring two films from Italian splatter master **Dario Argento**. Purely for nostalgic reasons, *Rue Morgue* caught up with Wyman to settle the story on how he came to associate himself with Argento and what he thought of the experience.

"After I did the music I tried to match it up with the film but I had to put a hand over my eyes," he recalls after having worked on Argento's *Phenomena* and *Opera* films. "I couldn't bear seeing some young girl get her head slit off by a lunatic."

But did the Stone Alone feel a kindred spirit with the Italian goremaster?

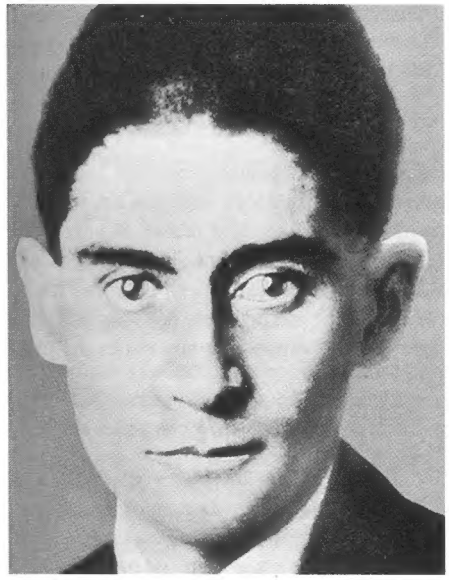
"Well, I met him and he's a lovely man," says Wyman, who spent several "great" evenings in Rome with the director. "But his films are not the sort of things I normally watch. It was just fun to experiment and try to do music to be compatible with him just as a learning experience. He shot a video with me to promote *Phenomena* and it was quite strange; he had a light swinging in a room and then bursting in slow motion. It was quite interesting."

## Revised Kafka emphasises absurd

Schocken Books is publishing the first new translation in almost 70 years of Franz Kafka's surrealistic classic *The Castle*. The new version, apparently based on the definitive German edition published in 1982, restores Kafka's work to the unfinished state in which the author left it.

Translator and University of Pennsylvania scholar Mark Harman says he tried to reinforce the sense of the absurd in Kafka's vision by making it more apparent in the use of language. Harman feels he restored the "roughness and ambiguity" to Kafka's idiosyncratic German, which he says later English translators smoothed over.

Schocken editorial director Arthur Samuelson says Kafka's *The Trial* will be published next, in September, while the remainder of the author's work will also be re-translated and appear before the year 2000.



Franz Kafka.

## Columbia Tristar heralds Anno Terroris

Columbia/Tristar Pictures is planning an aggressive year in horror with six releases beginning in September and continuing on through to the Spring of 1999. *John Carpenter's Vampires* is being described as "VERY horror" and has been set for an October 30 release date in Canada. Shot in New Mexico, the film relates the adventures of a Vatican-based squad of vampire hunters and is based on the John Steakly novel *Vampire$*. The film stars Daniel Baldwin, Sheryl Lee, James Woods and Maximilian Schell.

*I Know What You Did Last Summer 2* (a.k.a. *I Still Know*) is the self-explanatory sequel to the Kevin Williamson-penned summer horror hit flick of last year. This time, the cast of body-bag hopefuls is rounded out by Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddy Prinz Jr., Jennifer Esposito, Brandy Norwood and Mekhi Phifer. Opens in Canada November 20.

*Urban Legend* is currently filming in Toronto and stars Rebecca Gayheart (*Scream 2*) and Jared Leto in a story about kids on a college campus who begin to fall prey to urban myths. Might want to check out *Candyman* prior to seeing this (just as a point of reference, mind you). Out October 9.

Stephen King's spooky, unnerving *Apt Pupil* is getting the celluloid treatment from Brian Singer, whose first filmmaking effort was *The Usual Suspects*. The film stars Brian Renfro as 16-year-old Todd Bowden, a boy who believes he has discovered an aging SS Officer (Sir Ian McKellen as Kurt Dussander) living in his neighbourhood. Todd blackmails Dussander into revealing the atrocities he once committed in exchange for his silence, but the stories begin to take their toll on the impressionable boy — and the burdened old man. Domestic release set for the Fall.

*The 13th Floor* comes to us from Centropolis, the people who put together *Godzilla* and *Independence Day*. The budget is apparently much smaller and the film is being described as a sci-fi mystery that takes place "simultaneously in the future and the past." Scheduled for the early part of next year.

In *Idle Hands*, Vivica A. Fox plays Debi, a Druid princess who courts and destroys evil. Her mission: to assist high school student Anton (Devon Sawa) in recovering control of his possessed hand. The film is being touted as a 'slacker slasher' in the tradition of *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and will be released at an unspecified date next year. All release dates are subject to change.

# Weird animals and classic Hitchcock coming to Space

Space Television, Canada's pre-eminent source of fantastic entertainment, has announced the premiere of *Animal X*, a new series investigating the extraordinary, bizarre and unbelievable facts, myths and legends of the natural world. The freaky line-up includes the Komodo Dragon, the Phantom Black Dogs of Britain, Killer Bees, the hypnotizing dog, the Jersey Devil and the Chupacabra. *Animal X* will have its North American premiere on Sunday, July 5, at 7:30pm.

*Alfred Hitchcock Presents* also will be coming to Space beginning Monday, July 27 and will air Monday - Friday at 1:00pm and 7:00pm. Both shows will join Space favourites *The X-Files*, *Star Trek* (original series), *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Nowhere Man* and *The Twilight Zone*.



**Alfred Hitchcock joins Space's summer line-up.**



**Can *The Exorcist* be re-made for television?**

# Exorcist, Psycho to be remade

At the cusp of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *The Exorcist* comes news that the film is scheduled to be remade for television. Heading the project is **William Peter Blatty** (*The Exorcist III*), who wrote the script (based on his book) and will act as executive producer with Geoffrey Sax as director. The production team is currently doing casting calls to fill the role of the 12-year-old Regan before moving to Toronto to start shooting.

**Gus Van Sant** (*My Own Private Idaho*, *To Die For*) will be trying his hand at a remake of Alfred Hitchcock's classic *Psycho*. The film, which is rumoured to be a frame by frame remake, will star Vince Vaughan as Norman Bates and, as of press time, Nicole Kidman has expressed interest in playing the Janet Leigh role.

# What's Brooding...

**David Cronenberg**, Canada's prime film-making export, returns to the conceptual arena of horror and sex in his new futuristic thriller titled *eXistenZ* currently being shot in Toronto. The film stars **Jennifer Jason Leigh** as an inventor who creates a game which taps into its players' deepest fears and desires.

Cronenberg is directing from his own screenplay and will be joined behind the cameras by several long-time collaborators including **Peter Suchitsky** (cinematography), **Carol Spier** (production design) and **Jim Isaac** (special effects). Filmed with a budget of $31 million, *eXistenZ* will be Cronenberg's second feature for Alliance Pictures; the first, *Crash*, won a Special Jury Award (for "audacity") at the 1996 Cannes Film Festival.



**Belated sequel to Stephen King's *Carrie* currently in the works.**

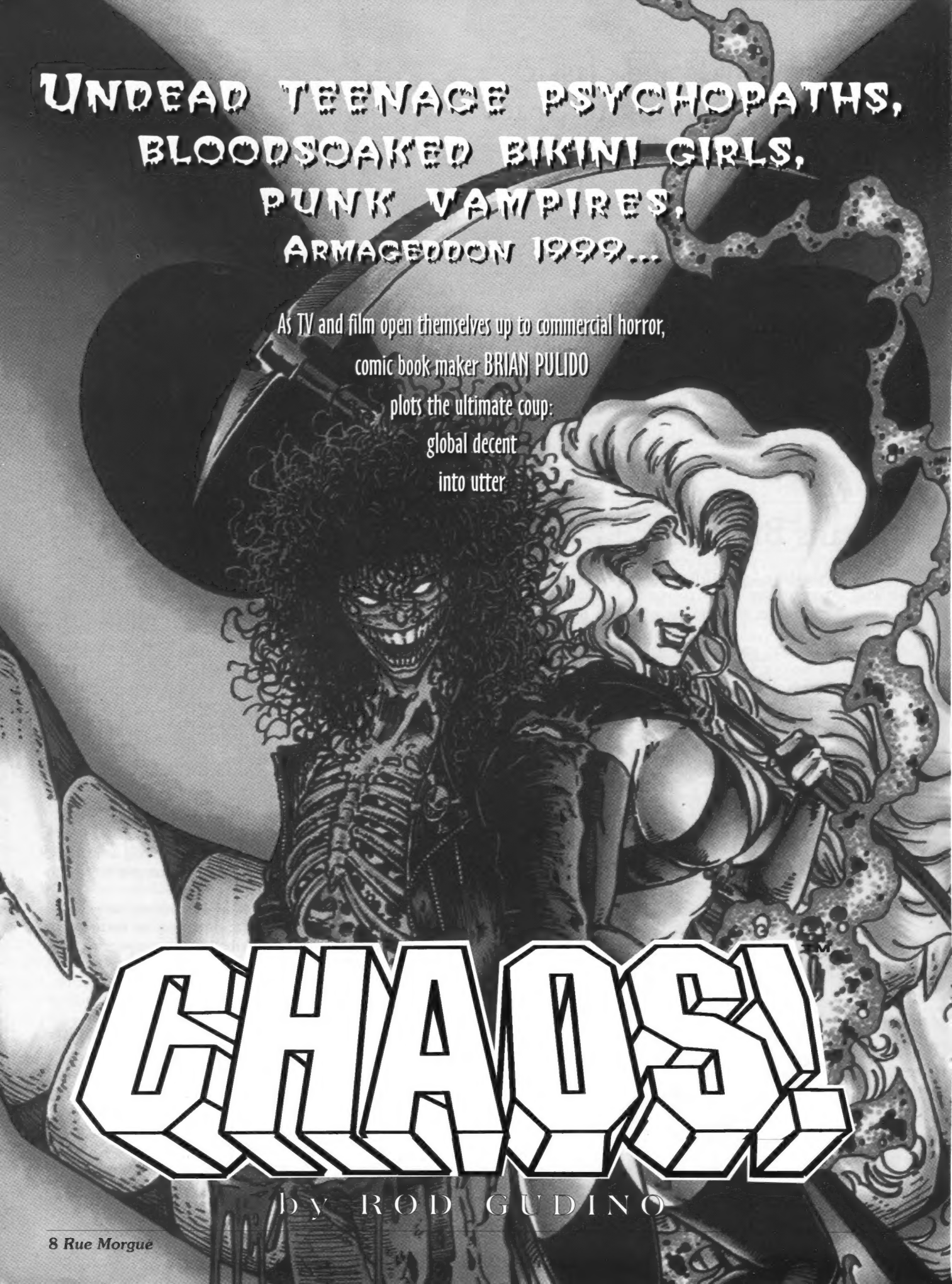
**Brett Easton Ellis'** controversial *American Psycho* is actually going to be made into a film, by **Mary Harron**, who shares screenwriting credits with **Guinevere Turner**. The film is being produced by Lions Gate Films, a Canadian-owned independent who will be financing the project in exchange for worldwide distribution rights. Ironically Ellis' book, which details the life of a banker who commits the most atrocious acts of murder in the name of intellectual exploration and emotional release, was nearly banned in Canada. **Leonardo DiCaprio** has been confirmed to play the lead.

A belated sequel to **Stephen King**'s *Carrie* is being put together by United Artists, the details of the story-line as yet unknown. **Amy Irving**, who played William Katt's girlfriend in the original, returns but the remainder of the cast will be new. Besides Irving, **Emily Bergl**, **Jason London** and **Dylan Bruno** will star. **Robert Mandel** (*The Substitute*) will direct with Bergl in the role of Carrie.

Principal photography for the latest *Halloween 7* flick wrapped up last month only to undergo some re-shooting scenes, reportedly necessitated because of technical problems that arose with Michael Myer's mask. **Patrick Lassiter**, who edited recent genre faves *Scream*, *Scream 2* and *Mimic*, is handling the editing and will probably wrap up the production as you read this. The real news, of course, is that original cast member **Jamie Lee Curtis** not only stars but is also sharing co-writing credits with **Kevin Williamson** (*Scream*, *Scream 2*).

Curtis will soon be hitting the promotional trail, and we'll do our best to get some quotes for you. In the meantime, you can look out for a teaser of the film to be attached to the upcoming video release of *Scream 2*.

Roadkill from the info highway: a producer's cut of *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* is apparently floating around in cyber space. The film offers a slew of new scenes and a different ending than the theatre version. This version is supposedly how the movie was "meant to be" and makes much more sense than the official release. Our take on the issue: why bother?


UNDEAD TEENAGE PSYCHOPATHS,
BLOODSOAKED BIKINI GIRLS,
PUNK VAMPIRES,
ARMAGEDDON 1999...
As TV and film open themselves up to commercial horror,
comic book maker BRIAN PULIDO
plots the ultimate coup:
global decent
into utter
C.H.A.O.S.
by ROD GUDINO




Despite the fact that comic books have been an obvious soil for imagery of the dark and fantastic, horror as such has not received the kind of interest one might expect. Sure, superheros have always combated a slimy foe of some sort and have, on occasion, even been slimy themselves (as with *Swamp Thing*, see *Rue Morgue* #1), but the horror in these scenarios has been pretty safely handled, all things told. Even today, with horror getting a strong foothold in the commercial marketplace, comics by and large have been pretty lax at exploiting what is their natural territory.

That might go far in explaining the existence of someone like Brian Pulido, who is not only one of the few horror devotees currently operating in the comics industry, but one that has made up for what others have missed on sheer ambition and visionary scope. A thirty-six year-old film graduate from NYU, Pulido is the founder of the CHAOS! Comics empire, one of the most rapidly growing commercial entities dedicated to horror entertainment and the *ne plus ultra* of the genre's representation in the comics field.

CHAOS! debuted in January of 1993 with tales of a psychotic undead teenager named Evil Ernie. The comic, with its gleeful intoxication of over-the-top violence and exaggerated horror, was an instant success. Determined to further cultivate supernatural horror in comics, Pulido went on to expand his company's roster with several related character lines, notably *Lady Death* and *Purgatori*. Soon thereafter CHAOS! took up the practice of billing itself as the place 'Where Darkness Dwells' and aggressively pursued the under-represented market with a slew of comic book innovations, commemorative editions and specially bound issues, as well as trading cards, apparel and toys. The company also inaugurated CHAOS! Rocks which brought their dark, cutting edge illustrations to rock music, beginning with the heavy metal band Megadeth.

Awards and honourable mentions have stockpiled ever since, making CHAOS! a consistently ranked top ten comic book publisher in North America and the winner of eleven international printing awards. For Pulido, however, things are just starting to get underway. As he reveals in the following interview, the real goal is something akin to world domination.

*What kind of comic horror was on the market when you initially released* Evil Ernie?
Full Moon Entertainment had a horror line, Marvel was a year away from launching *Midnight Suns*, so really it was an in between time. Certainly it wasn't like the mid seventies when Marvel was in its heyday with *Werewolf By Night*, *Dracula* and *Love of Frankenstein*.

*Specifically what did you want to introduce to comics?*
From the very beginning it was the idea that we were telling movies in comic book form. Even from the first black and white *Evil Ernie* issues, there was the belief that these were pretty much all movies on a page. Our agenda in part has always been to make motion pictures, so it's always been there.

*In terms of horror, what did you want to introduce to the genre?*
Specific to *Evil Ernie* is a classic horror story. It was conceived in 1987 so it's coming at the cusp of the splatterpunk literary movement. There's an aspect to the story that is like a classic ghost story where you don't actually see violence occur, and that is based on suspense. But there's another aspect where there is that violent chaos. Now at the same time that's how *Evil Ernie* is classically horrific, but it is juxtaposed with an action sensibility and a pop cultural sensibility. So there is a kind of cool wash — that's the specific horror there. *Evil Ernie* is an updated teenage Frankenstein for the '90s. He certainly didn't mean to turn out the way he did; he was abused and this is the result of it. In *Lady Death*'s particular story, it's as if she is a Dark Diva of Death. That first story has fantasy involved in it as well, but in the original conception of the story what is horrific is the notion that death can actually be something beautiful, a warm embrace. You are confronting your fear, but your fear can be quite beautiful — it can be something you are drawn to. Then in the case of a comic book like *Purgatori*, clearly she is a classic vampire. The horrific element in *Purgatori* has a lot of the genre staples that you see in a traditional vampire story.

*Will you be branching out and exploring other aspects of horror?*
Absolutely. In fact I'd say that right now we have quite a few bandwidths. *Evil Ernie* represents splatter horror. *Lady Death* clearly leans towards fantasy; we have vampiric entertainment. I would also say we have an equivalent of something like *Scream*,



## "WE LIVE IN A CULTURE PRECIPITATED BY THE MEDIA; THAT PEOPLE SHOULD LOCK THEIR DOORS AT NIGHT, THAT YOU SHOULD BE AFRAID OF YOUR NEIGHBOUR, ESSENTIALLY THAT YOU SHOULD BE AFRAID IN GENERAL."

which is a comic called *The Omen* and it focuses in on dysfunctional teens who are granted powers. We will continue to explore different bandwidths.

*Will CHAOS! remain exclusive to horror?*
No. We're going to launch a sub-print called Breakthrough Entertainment which will go into what I call heroic entertainment but not of the superhero type. We're going to be exploring action, sci-fi, and I suppose there will be a dark slant in one way or another.

*Is the genre experiencing a resurgence on the market?*
Absolutely. You can see it clearly in the movies, in video games, you can see it in musical sub-cultures that are gaining prominence, everything from Death Metal onwards, the sales are very strong. My point of view from what I see is that pop culture in general is growing darker in that the themes that we are toying with really have to do with extreme life or death survival issues. And when that comes to prominence, usually horror evolves, because horror is about looking at what scares you.

*Why are these ideas coming out now in particular?*
I would say that the average daily experience for the average person in America, due to the media and other things, seems to be more dire, more survival oriented, more life and death. We live in a culture precipitated by the media. People are told to lock their doors at night and fear their neighbours. Essentially, the message is that you should be afraid in general. So we cope with the fear by looking at things like horrific entertainment, where a fantasy environment allows you the opportunity to confront the stuff, kind of play with it and get comfortable with it. So as we get darker I expect to see horror becoming more prominent and then going to the other extreme, you know, with real simple, fun, upbeat entertainment.

*Evil Ernie falls into which half of that, or is he part of both?*
Yeah, he's both. It's funny, because there is an element of pure fun in Evil Ernie. It's dark but it's fun.

*Evil Ernie and Lady Death certainly celebrate death and dying.*



**Brian Pulido: kid in a toxic candy store.**

It's almost invisible to me, but definitely coming from the point of view that these stories, this mythology, what these characters are about — death is absolutely okay and welcome in their world. Standard horrific material is perfectly valid; it's about interruption of some normal occurrence and its restoration at the end. That's not necessarily what our stuff is about; we're usually saying, yeah it was normal, we're messing with it and you know what? It's getting worse.

*Will it be getting worse in the milieu of* Evil Ernie*?*
Our entire cosmos is possibly heading towards Armageddon in December of 1999 [laughter]. I love the mischievous quality of the whole thing.

*I suppose that would explain your love for Megadeth and the other musical projects you are currently pursuing.*
I have a whole bandwidth of interests. I'm into all kinds of stuff and something that I connected with powerfully early on was the dark material in aggressive music. Since I was a teenager, I've enjoyed all forms of rock and roll and definitely enjoyed hard rock of all kinds; I don't know what you call it anymore, because there are so many different kinds. I've loved Megadeth for over a decade, especially ten years ago when I was a lot angrier — it was so easy to access the stuff.

*You also plan on getting aggressive in terms of online content, video games and motion pictures. What can you tell me about that?*
What I can tell you is that we are in Hollyweird and we are talking to producers and directors about the possibility of taking on some of our projects. That's a blanket statement; what I can tell you is that the quality of the people that we're speaking with is superb and the possibilities look quite strong. One of the first things we're advocating is *Evil Ernie* as a live action movie. That will happen. We're interested in diversification too. For example, one of our characters, Chastity, a punk vampire, has great possibilities for a TV show. The main plot is a fun story line and the sub-plot is the action end of the comic. I'm an old film graduate; it's time for me to get back to the movies.

*You mentioned Armageddon in 1999. Ultimately, do all comic book characters get discontinued or do they keep going?*
Well, they evolve. What we're doing is telling the story of a character's life and that is unlike how some characters exist in comics. For example, Superman has been around for 40 years and he's still about the same age. We are saying that these characters are getting older and that they're moving through spaces in their lives, so things keep moving.

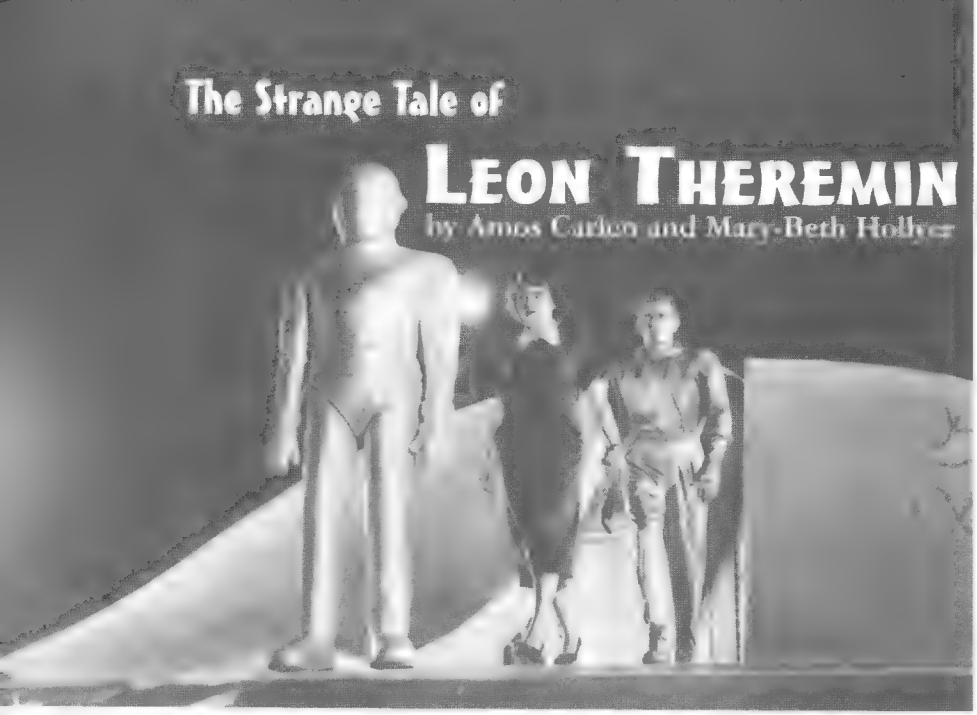
*Will they get older? Will they die?*
Yes, I suppose they'll get older. But you also have to keep in mind that Lady Death is immortal and Evil Ernie is an undead teenage psychotic; I think we're sort of locked in terms of visible age and time. But in terms of how he can move, in terms of adolescence and young adulthood, they keep moving.

*What's your ultimate agenda?*
I want people to look inside my brain, to come around and swim in it; I want to spread it out through the tapestry of the country and I want to go international. I want people to see inside this twisted psyche and I want it to be part of their day to day lives and I want the name CHAOS! Comics to be a household word and each and every person to be proud to be associated with it.

*You're the real Evil Ernie, aren't you?*
You bet.

# The Strange Tale of LEON THEREMIN

by Amos Carlen and Mary-Beth Hollyer



**Theremin's marvel is best remembered from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.**

Regarded as one of the most important musical instruments of the 20th century and the inspiration for the development of electronic music in the past fifty years, the Theremin's history is shrouded in mystery and intrigue. Its creator, the Russian engineer-cum-musician Lev Sergeivitch Termen (b. 1896), became a story in himself after he seemingly disappeared into thin air in the late 1930s, leaving his peculiar invention to develop a separate, but no less intriguing history.

Despite the Theremin's impact on western culture, few people can identify its unique sound, although most of us have heard it either in movies or in popular music. The Theremin sounds whiny (a bit like a violin), otherworldly and downright eerie. In film, the sound became a trigger for fear: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Thing*, *It Came From Outer Space*, and *Bride of Frankenstein* all used it to create an atmosphere of suspense and horror. Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys was so creeped out by the memories of those movies, he decided to use the Theremin on Good Vibrations, which is somewhat ironic when one considers the scientific principles of the instrument.

Lev Termen invented the Theremin — initially called the Aetherphon — in 1919 based on his observations of the effects a human body has in close proximity to a poorly tuned radio receiver. One of the few instruments that are played without touching it, the Theremin even looks like something out of an early sci-fi movie. A wooden box with two metal antennae, it is played by waving one's hands near the antennae, one for pitch and the other for volume.

Termen spent a few years perfecting his device until it made its first public showing at the 1920 Moscow Industrial Fair. The instrument made such an impact that Termen and his invention were summoned to meet Russian leader Lenin in 1922. Seeing a connection between the development of electronics and the success of communism, Lenin commissioned a national tour and the building of 600 more Theremins. This triumph led to tours of Western Europe and the U.S., where Termen eventually settled for approximately 11 years and changed his name to Leon Theremin.

But it was in the U.S. that the instrument started becoming much more than an oddity. Prominent composers like Edgar Varese, Gershwin, Ravel and Joseph Schillinger (whose First Airphonic Suite became, in 1929, the first American work for the Theremin) began writing pieces specifically for the instrument. Theremin himself put together a Theremin band and performed in a number of concert venues, including Carnegie Hall in New York. Clara Rockmore, his student and a member of the band, later became revered as one of the few Theremin masters (Rockmore died recently, on May 10, 1998 at the age of 87). On film, the instrument's debut is hard to pinpoint but some say it was *King Kong* (1933), and on radio it was featured prominently in *The Green Hornet* (1936-1952).

As the thirties came to a close, however, Leon Theremin's life took a mysterious turn and the strange events that followed would not be uncovered for over fifty years. Sometime around 1938-39, the inventor disappeared suddenly from his New York home. What happened is not entirely clear, even now, though some of the facts have since come to light.

Apparently, Theremin had been kidnapped by Soviet agents and was put in the Russian labour camp Magaden for seven years where he and other leading Russian scientists worked on aviation, construction and electronic projects. In fact, Theremin would later be credited for inventing the 'bug' (the miniature eavesdropping device that got Nixon ousted from office). After the war, he continued working "on different bad things" for the KGB until 1967 when he began teaching at the Moscow Conservatory and University.

The Conservatory fired Theremin in 1977 and destroyed his instruments with an axe after a New York Times article revealed his whereabouts and the peculiar events surrounding his life. Even so, by the 1980s, most people figured he had passed away. It was not until the early '90s that a filmmaker named Steven Martin (not the same guy) decided to make a movie on Leon Theremin and discovered in his research that he was still alive (at 95!). Theremin was brought back to the U.S. where he was reunited with many people from his past and was made to realize the impact that his instrument had on popular culture. He died shortly thereafter, in 1993, and Martin's documentary, *Theremin: An Electronic Odyssey*, was released two years later.

To be fair, the Theremin has remained to this day more or less a fringe instrument. However, shortly after Theremin's disappearance, his instrument began taking a life of its own, as if in eerie homage to its creator. No less a director than Alfred Hitchcock made the instrument the centerpiece of the soundtrack to his 1944 film *Spellbound*, where it effectively conveyed feelings of mental illness. *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) also featured a Theremin as did *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, which remains the Theremin's most famous usage. Other horror sightings include many episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, *House of Dark Shadows* and *Night of Dark Shadows*, while pop icons with an affinity to darkness have also employed it, among them Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin, Marilyn Manson (on Dope Hat) and The Cramps (on Wet Nightmare).

For those who are really curious about this fascinating instrument and its creator, the documentary *Theremin: An Electronic Odyssey* is highly recommended. Those hooked on to the World Wide Web might want to check out *http://www.nashville.net/~Theremin*.

And if you are interested in building one of your own (supposedly not that hard), you might want to check out the following two sites: *http://www.physics.gla.ac.uk/~kskeldon/PubSci/exhibits/E9/* and *htttp://capella.dur.ac.uk/jon/ThereminUK.html*.

Essay

# Story-Teller, Playwright, Painter, Butcher

## *Understanding Approaches to Horror in Film*

by Rod Gudino



**Janet Leigh strikes a classic pose.**

One of the main issues that we at *Rue Morgue* initially contended with when conceiving the editorial parameters of the magazine was how to define our subject matter. It's a point you would have seen more than once if you've been following the magazine to any degree; it's been a recurring theme in editorials and the type of things and people we've chosen to profile or review. In a word, our belief is that art labeled as horror represents a fraction of the horrific entertainment currently out there.

Part of that interest has its roots in a little project which was alluded to in *RM*'s premiere issue (Note From Underground), involving the chronological viewing of 98 horror films between the periods of 1950 and 1980. It took two years to view all of the movies on our list, which were compiled on a whim from a book by Stephen King (*Danse Macabre*) and modified slightly by ourselves.

We agreed afterwards that the list was as insightful as it was wanting, and that it nevertheless conveyed a lot of what the genre is about. We have since begun a second, more ambitious project (incorporating horror from the roots of cinema to the present day), but find it proper to make a few comments at the crossroads, especially since it comes to bear directly on our initial concern -- the understanding of the wider context of horror entertainment.

The first thing to point out is that what we commonly call horror films have been influenced, at times severely, by films which we would not commonly call horror films. That doesn't make the second set horror by default, but it does clue us in to their horrific elements, sometimes overt, sometimes muted, but always undeniably present. Many of these films, such as Peter Weir's *Picnic At Hanging Rock*, Luis Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* and Frank Perry's *Last Summer*, you will notice on the list (reprinted on page 14). While not horror films of the common type, they do demonstrate an interest in the horrific and, in this sense, exemplify horror films of a different sort, or to put it another way, they represent non-genre approaches to the subject matter. They are important because they alert us to the reality that filmmakers do not work in genre vacuums, but in a greater world of cinema and in a greater world of human experience.

Secondly, while horror films have been commonly discussed from the perspective of their threats (i.e. monsters, psychos, disasters, fate), there is something to be gleaned from the way in which they approach horror on a more general level, specifically, how they articulate or approach the horrific. Within these 98 films, there are several distinct approaches which have manifested themselves historically, two of which we commonly associate with horror films, and two which we usually do not. This is a happy circumstance for the discerning viewer who wishes to understand horror films a little better without having to sit through the whole list. Four films have been taken from the list which, I believe, exemplify the full spectrum of approaches to the horrific in cinema within the thirty year time period.*

### *Psycho* (1960)
### Alfred Hitchcock

Easily the most natural film on the list is Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, one of the most accomplished pieces of cinema and the single most influential horror film ever made, bar none. Released in 1960, it introduced audiences to a different kind of monster, the human being, and adroitly bandied sympathy and terror between a shy, introverted motel keep and his fragile and deadly private life. Its famous shower scene would be mimicked endlessly as knives loomed on the screen throughout two decades of emerging slasher, suspense and splatter films.

*Psycho* is an achievement in the art of story-telling, with its meticulous unraveling of plot points, intensified dramatic situations, ambitious cinematography and distinctive performances. In its approach, we may well compare *Psycho* to the oral and literary tradition of the ghost story or weird tale, wherein the teller or author strives to

**Disclaimer: these films are not necessarily the first films of their type, or the best or even the most horrific. They have been chosen for their clarity of composition as regards each particular approach. As we will note later, the majority of horror films combine one or several of these approaches and are seldom, if ever, exclusive to one or another. For the sake of clarity, the films will be discussed in order of approach most to least common.*

**"*Psycho*... conforms to the most popular notion of what horror films are about: they create and instill fear through the mastery of fine story-telling."**

manipulate the audience's response by withholding key information, creating and sustaining suspense, and choosing situations where the story's ideas can best be negotiated to ultimate effect. *Psycho* is nothing short of a cinematic version of this art-form and in this sense conforms to the most popular notion of what horror films are about: they create and instill fear through the mastery of fine story-telling. That Hitchcock is widely considered to be a master of the cinema attests to the broad acceptance of this approach to making movies in modern culture.

With *Psycho*, we see that though any given film may have political, social or religious meaning, it ultimately succeeds or fails on its ability to effectively tell an entertaining story. Like all great ghost stories and weird tales, *Psycho* is finely crafted and, despite its subject matter, ultimately a pleasurable experience. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of horror films subscribe to this approach to some degree, though not all, as we shall soon see. Hitchcock's *Frenzy* and *The Birds* exemplify it, as do *Creature From The Black Lagoon*, *The Quatermass Xperiment*, *Wait Until Dark*, *Night of the Demon*, *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?*, *No Way To Treat A Lady*, *Trilogy of Terror*, *Jaws*, and *Salem's Lot*. That some of these films are not considered to be good or even frightening, simply means that they lacked the skill to tell their stories effectively.

### *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974)
### Tobe Hooper

*The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is generally considered a classic of horror cinema, even if fans outside of the genre find it difficult to appreciate its wholesale immersion into a world that is vividly gritty, ugly and disorienting. An independent film made in 1974 by a slew of university students, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* represents an approach to horror that is nothing less than antithetical to that of *Psycho*. In the movie, a group of teenagers venture out to an abandoned house in the heat-seared Texan countryside. There, they run into a family of cannibalistic psychotics who practice a savagery completely unchecked by social law or human conscience. Only one of the teenagers, Sally (Marilyn Burns), ultimately escapes destruction at the hands — not of an insane individual — but an insane culture.

What is interesting about this film is how it eschews almost all of the devices central to the story-telling approach. Shot on hand-held video in natural (sometimes absent) lighting, sparse musical scoring, stark sets, unannounced murder scenes, and unexplained motives, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* excuses its lack of standard moviemaking conventions for the sake of simulated realism. What results is a film with no editorial gloss, that represents situations as only impartially horrific and disregards closure. Its function is to depict, not to entertain or judge or explain, making it a movie not so much about trauma as a simulated instance of it.

Ironically, its lack of refinement is what secured success for *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, primarily because it found root with a different kind of movie viewing audience; those who would rather be shocked outright than entertained by stories. With this movie we see that, strictly speaking, horror is not about being entertained but about being horrified. It's not an argument that has great appeal; after all, most people watch movies to be entertained and anyway, a message like that can be communicated without compromising the story. But it can't be done in quite the same way.

Movies with this Butcher approach can most obviously be seen in the early splatter films, even if splatter would later go on to incorporate the conventions of story-telling in an attempt to broaden audience appeal. The movies of Dario Argento (principally *The Bird With The Crystal Plumage* and *Deep Red*) portray an interest in the grittily real, especially with respect to the act of killing, though Argento is also fond of story-telling conventions (notably *Suspiria*). By the time the slasher craze enters the picture in the late seventies (following the release of the hugely influential *Halloween*), the notion of realism becomes embedded in the high artifice of story-telling filmmaking. Not surprisingly, this cross-pollinated form still governs many of the horror films being released even today.



**Simulated realism: *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre.***

### *The Seventh Seal* (1956)
### Ingmar Bergman

One of the most brilliant films of the last hundred years also has the unique quality of providing us with a third approach to horror filmmaking. Bergman's background in theatre and his desire to explore themes of human interest are what principally make *The Seventh Seal* an archetype of the Playwright approach. Thematic interests outside of the immediate drama of the film govern this approach, and horror becomes a catalyst or a figurative embodiment of those interests. Principally, however, horror is here represented through theme and intellectual content, rather than the devices of story-telling or shock experience.

In the film, a knight (Max Von Sydow) challenges Death (Bengt Ekerot) to a game of chess in an attempt to delay his impending doom. The game forms the backdrop to a movie that demonstrates, through a series of characters and vignettes, remarkable acumen at conveying the phenomenon of death and dying as an existential problem. Its approach is analytical, theme-oriented, and character and dialogue heavy. As such, *The Seventh Seal* represents the most ambitious approach to horror because it presumes to convey it in the abstract, purely as theme and as intellectual interest. There is no suspense or shock in *The Seventh Seal*, but its subject matter is still the experience of horror; the

# The List Horror Films 1950 - 1980

| Date | TITLE<br>Director |
|---|---|
| 1951 | THE THING<br>Christian Nyby |
| 1953 | IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE<br>Jack Arnold |
| 1954 | CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON<br>Jack Arnold |
| 1954 | THEM!<br>Gordon Douglas |
| 1955 | LES DIABOLIQUES<br>Henri-Georges Clouzot |
| 1955 | THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT<br>Val Guest |
| 1955 | THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER<br>Charles Laughton |
| 1956 | NOT OF THIS EARTH<br>Roger Corman |
| 1956 | THE BAD SEED<br>Mervyn LeRoy |
| 1956 | X THE UNKNOWN<br>Leslie Norman |
| 1956 | THE SEVENTH SEAL<br>Ingmar Bergman |
| 1956 | INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS<br>Don Siegel |
| 1957 | ENEMY FROM SPACE<br>Val Guest |
| 1957 | THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN<br>Jack Arnold |
| 1957 | NIGHT OF THE DEMON<br>Jaques Tourneur |
| 1958 | THE HORROR OF DRACULA<br>Terence Fisher |
| 1958 | IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE<br>Edward L. Cahn |
| 1958 | THE FLY<br>Kurt Neumann |
| 1958 | THE H-MAN<br>Inoshiro Honda |
| 1958 | MACABRE<br>William Castle |
| 1958 | I BURY THE LIVING<br>Albert Band |
| 1959 | THE KILLER SHREWS<br>Ken Curtis |
| 1959 | PEEPING TOM<br>Michael Powell |
| 1959 | HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM<br>Arthur Crabtree |
| 1960 | PSYCHO<br>Alfred Hitchcock |
| 1960 | SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER<br>Joseph L. Mankiewicz |
| 1960 | VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED<br>Wolf Rilla |
| 1961 | WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?<br>Robert Aldritch |
| 1961 | THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM<br>Roger Corman |
| 1961 | BLACK SUNDAY<br>Mario Bava |
| 1961 | GORGO<br>Eugene Lowry |
| 1962 | PANIC IN THE YEAR ZERO<br>Ray Milland |
| 1962 | CARNIVAL OF SOULS<br>Herk Harvey |
| 1962 | BURN WITCH BURN<br>Sidney Hayers |
| 1963 | X—THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES<br>Roger Corman |
| 1963 | THE HAUNTING<br>Robert Wise |
| 1963 | DEMENTIA-13<br>Francis Ford Coppola |
| 1963 | DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS<br>Steve Sekely |
| 1963 | THE BIRDS<br>Alfred Hitchcock |
| 1963 | THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL<br>Luis Bunuel |
| 1963 | LADY IN A CAGE<br>Walter Graumann |
| 1964 | SEANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON<br>Bryan Forbes |
| 1964 | STRAIGHT-JACKET<br>William Castle |
| 1964 | THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH<br>Roger Corman |
| 1965 | DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS<br>Freddie Francis |
| 1965 | THE TOMB OF LIGEIA<br>Roger Corman |
| 1965 | REPULSION<br>Roman Polanski |
| 1965 | I SAW WHAT YOU DID<br>William Castle |
| 1965 | HUSH, HUSH SWEET CHARLOTTE<br>Robert Aldritch |
| 1967 | THE DEADLY BEES<br>Freddie Francis |
| 1967 | WAIT UNTIL DARK<br>Terence Young |
| 1967 | HOUR OF THE WOLF<br>Ingmar Bergman |
| 1968 | THE WITCHFINDER GENERAL<br>Michael Reeves |
| 1968 | NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD<br>George A. Romero |
| 1968 | NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY<br>Jack Smight |
| 1968 | ROSEMARY'S BABY<br>Roman Polanski |
| 1969 | LAST SUMMER<br>Frank Perry |
| 1969 | EYE OF THE CAT<br>David Lowell Rich |
| 1969 | THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE<br>Dario Argento |
| 1970 | THE HOUSE THAT DRIPPED BLOOD<br>Peter Duffell |
| 1971 | WILLARD<br>Daniel Mann |
| 1971 | LET'S SCARE JESSICA TO DEATH<br>John Hancock |
| 1971 | DUEL<br>Steven Spielberg |
| 1971 | THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES<br>Robert Fuest |
| 1971 | WHEN MICHAEL CALLS<br>Philip Leacock |
| 1972 | FRENZY<br>Alfred Hitchcock |
| 1972 | DELIVERANCE<br>John Boorman |
| 1972 | ASYLUM<br>Roy Ward Baker |
| 1973 | THE EXORCIST<br>William Friedkin |
| 1973 | SISTERS<br>Brian De Palma |
| 1973 | THE WICKER MAN<br>Robin Hardy |
| 1973 | DON'T LOOK NOW<br>Nicholas Roeg |
| 1974 | THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE<br>Tobe Hooper |
| 1975 | TRILOGY OF TERROR<br>Dan Curtis |
| 1975 | JAWS<br>Steven Spielberg |
| 1975 | SEIZURE<br>Oliver Stone |
| 1975 | THE STEPFORD WIVES<br>Bryan Forbes |
| 1975 | RACE WITH THE DEVIL<br>Jack Starrett |
| 1975 | THEY CAME FROM WITHIN<br>David Cronenberg |
| 1976 | DEEP RED<br>Dario Argento |
| 1976 | ERASERHEAD<br>David Lynch |
| 1976 | BURNT OFFERINGS<br>Dan Curtis |
| 1976 | CARRIE<br>Brian De Palma |
| 1977 | RABID<br>David Cronenberg |
| 1977 | SUSPIRIA<br>Dario Argento |
| 1977 | MARTIN<br>George A. Romero |
| 1978 | PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK<br>Peter Weir |
| 1978 | THE FURY<br>Brian De Palma |
| 1978 | HALLOWEEN<br>John Carpenter |
| 1978 | INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS<br>Philip Kaufman |
| 1978 | SOMEONE'S WATCHING ME<br>John Carpenter |
| 1978 | RITUALS<br>Peter Carter |
| 1979 | THE BROOD<br>David Cronenberg |
| 1979 | THE SHOUT<br>Jerzy Skolimowski |
| 1979 | SALEM'S LOT<br>Tobe Hooper |
| 1979 | ALIEN<br>Ridley Scott |
| 1979 | DAWN OF THE DEAD<br>George A. Romero |
| 1980 | THE SHINING<br>Stanley Kubrick |



**Bengt Ekerot and Max Von Sydow in Bergman's theme-heavy *The Seventh Seal*.**

audience is made to leave the movie theatre in the contemplation of the horrific.

Again, the dramatic roots of this form of filmmaking are unmistakable, echoes of which can be seen most vividly in the Tennessee Williams' penned *Suddenly Last Summer*, and to less effect in Bergman's own *Hour of the Wolf* and *Wild Strawberries* (not on the list), as well as *The Exterminating Angel*, *Picnic At Hanging Rock*, *Last Summer* and *The Stepford Wives*. Not surprisingly, these films are more commonly classified as drama films, whether their story-lines treat of the horrific, romantic, speculative, or historical, and their gloss be religious, political, social or philosophical.

### *Eraserhead* (1976)
### David Lynch

A standalone film on many levels, it isn't surprising that David Lynch's *Eraserhead* would have no other like representatives on our list. The film does have something in common with pre-1950 cinema, notably in the early silent expressionist films which relied on highly charged visuals to convey horror. Lynch's film is clearly as retrospective as it is progressive, offering a Painter's eye of horror that relies exclusively on representation.

A film difficult to describe, *Eraserhead* concerns itself with a man (Jack Nance), his wife and their freakish baby, but really it's the suffocating mood of the film — its tone of urban dread, mental paralysis, gross physicalness and bleak surrealism — that creates the lasting impression. A light bulb, a radiator, a close-walled room, the head of an eraser studied and dissected at extreme close-up, all become horrific through the mute insistence of images, their ugly, ominous presence and the breath-like, hissing sounds that are attached to them. With *Eraserhead* David Lynch isolates a critical aspect of horror cinema; its ability to make anything frightening through mood and atmosphere, in short, through sheer cinematic effect.

This approach deviates significantly from story-telling as much as the Butcher approach, in that it does not rely on invoking dramatic or narrative coherence to create situations of fear; anything — a coffee cup, a stretch of street, a woman smoking a cigarette — can be frightening simply because they are made to be so by displacing them, by not explaining them, by making them seem odd, unreal, or menacing.

With this approach, we see that horror needs no context, either dramatic or otherwise; things are horrific simply because they are represented that way. Not surprisingly, the Painter approach can provide its own unique suspense and often translates the vocabulary of horror into a language of surrealism. Films that employ this approach (though not to the exclusive extent of *Eraserhead*) are Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr* (not on the list), the films of William Peter Blatty, notably *The Exorcist* and *The Exorcist III* (not on the list), *Carnival of Souls*, *The Haunting*, *Rituals*, *Let's Scare Jessica To Death* and *The Shining*.

*

Filmmakers do not often think in terms of genres when they make their movies, and they also do not think in terms of particular approaches. In fact, most films do not limit themselves to one or another approach, but employ several to greater and lesser degrees. John Carpenter's *Halloween*, for example, combines story-telling with the highly charged atmosphere of the Painter approach, as does Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* and the previously noted *Carnival of Souls*. George Romero's films (*Night of the Living Dead*, *Martin*, *Dawn of the Dead*) are notorious for their clinically precise Butcher approach mixed with over-the-top comic book story-telling; David Cronenberg prefers to paint Butcher realism in cold abstract strokes employing the sexual subtext interests of the Playwright; Ridley Scott's *Alien* threads a thin story-line across a tour de force that fuses elements from all of these approaches, and so on.

It's a pretty obvious conclusion that the language of film is capable of many more possibilities than are commonly afforded it by market specifications. Similarly, horror content — like romance, violence, poignancy, sympathy or anything else for that matter — is not strictly defined within this complex medium.



**Fear is in the eye of the beholder: Jack Nance in Lynch's *Eraserhead*.**




## Death Flies a Cesna

The Night Flier
Starring Miguel Ferrer and Julie Entwisle
Directed by Mark Pavia
Written by Mark Pavia & Jack O'Donnell
Based on a story by Stephen King




This is actually a very good film. We didn't expect it to be, what with it being a straight to video release based on a Stephen King story (most King vehicles are notoriously bad), that deals with a vampire. Now here's the quibble: vampires by and large have gotten a pretty lame treatment at the hands of horror filmmakers. Most have opted, in one form or another, to simply retrace the steps Bram Stoker laid out one hundred years ago. Vampire enters community, vampire threatens community, Van Helsing character is called in, vampire is hunted and dispensed of by a wooden stake through the heart. It may be classic, but it's also boring.

Enter Dwight Renfield, the vampiric entity of *The Night Flier*, who not only flies a jet black Cesna over middle America but lands in tiny isolated airports late at night. He is — what we see of him — a kind of traditional vampire; he wears a long black cape and riding boots, but he is also very different from the traditional vampire in that he defiles his victims, Jeffrey Dahmer-like, before disappearing into the skies once again.

The story, as good as they come, appeals to trash tabloid editor Merton Morrison (Dan Monahan), who assigns the case to his top writer/photographer Richard Dees (Ferrer). A giant, comic book character of a man, Dees is sympathetic in being so utterly despicable; here is a man who has no scruples, who has been wearied by the avalanche of bizarre deaths and suicides that made his journalistic career and whose sentiments have gone miles beyond cynicism. He takes the assignment, climbs aboard his own little plane and sets out, business as usual, to break the story on what he thinks is America's latest serial killer.

The film does the best thing it can do at this point, which is to isolate Dees as he undergoes his hunt for the sinister aviator, whom he comes to discover only through the trail of carnage left behind and the peculiar stories, seen in flashbacks, of the witnesses. Bodies at the morgue caught in the cold flashes of Dees' camera and eerie dream sequences build up a vampire monster different from the one we typically see in the theatres. Contrary to what the box cover indicates, director Mark Pavia prefers to build tension by concentrating on the black, impenetrable windows of the Cesna, suggesting its occupant with disquieting silhouettes.

That's one of the best things about *The Night Flier*; it's one of the few movies that actually takes Stephen King's lead by telling the story rather than giving it all away in the name of effects and boogey monsters running amok. There is a lot of gore here — make that *a lot* (enough for Renfield to actually urinate blood) — but the violence remains pretty restrained. And our vampire, absurd as he may be for flying an airplane, is ultimately hideous and human and unscathed; unlike Dracula in that he merely passes through a world of human folly while pursuing his own vampiric ends.

**-Rod Gudino**

## Gore and Giggles Galore

Evil Dead 2
Starring Bruce Campbell, Sarah Berry and Dan Hicks
Directed by Sam Raimi
Written by Sam Raimi and Scott Spiegel

High camp and high horror do not often a good combo make and it takes a skilled moviemaker to mesh the two successfully. Sam Raimi is one such artiste. He proved it with *Evil Dead* and he proved it again five years later with *Evil Dead 2*.

Originally released in 1987, *Evil Dead 2* is now available on video, for the first time in widescreen and beautifully remastered. Ash, played by Bruce Campbell, the lone survivor of the first film, returns (for the first time?) to the scene of the crime — a lone cabin in the middle of a fog enshrouded forest. Five minutes later a gateway to hell has been opened, Ash's girlfriend is possessed by diabolical demons, and the stage is



set for ninety minutes of gore, fright, and fun.

More of a remake than a direct sequel, *Dead 2* recreates many set pieces from its predecessor: the demon trapped in the basement, the possession of Ash's fiancé, and the notorious girl-getting-raped-by-trees sequence. But in the five years since the original, Raimi had become a more polished filmmaker, and the higher budget didn't hurt either.

So rather than feeling cheated at seeing the same film over again, fans were treated to choice cuts revamped and improved, while witnessing new horrors (and laughs), such as Ash's frantic fight with his right hand (before and after amputation), his eventual demonic possession, and his ultimate warrior mode, complete with chainsaw.

*Evil Dead 2* constantly teeters between brilliance and stupidity, but Raimi's skilled directing and Campbell's vastly underrated comic genius ensure that it never goes too over the top. An incredibly enjoyable film which undoubtedly paved the way for Peter Jackson's more ridiculous gorefests, *Evil Dead 2* is the epitome of horror played for laughs without sacrificing its self-respect.

NOTE TO DEAD HEADS: Despite there being no indication on the video box, the tape does include the original theatrical trailer, approximately one minute after the movie's end, so hit that fast-forward button.

**-Pedro Cabezuelo**

## Serpent Still On Cue

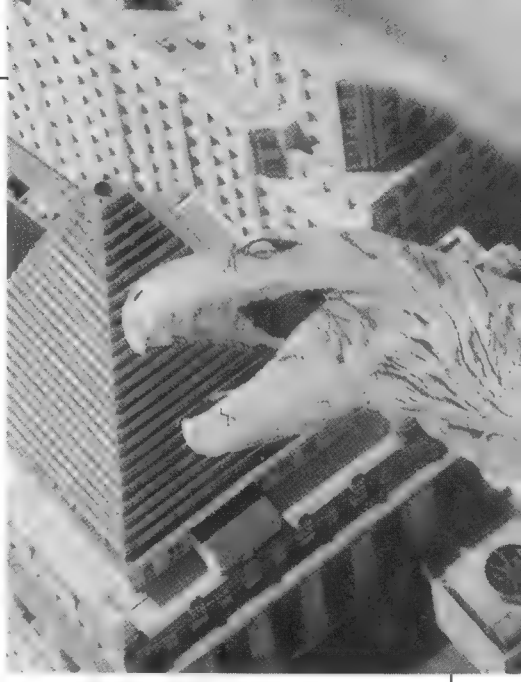
Q The Winged Serpent
Starring Michael Moriarty and David Carradine
Written and directed by Larry Cohen

The Cinemorticians at *Rue Morgue* are a little divided on whether the reissue of Larry Cohen's creature feature *Q The Winged Serpent* is worthy of the cause. The film initially came out in 1982, but it looks more like a product of the mid-seventies with its loud, irritating score and its insufferably bad movie monster special effects. Nevertheless, there is a lot of charm to this film and — scoring and effects aside — *Q* deserves a spot alongside some of the more enjoyable offerings of the creature feature subgenre.




Cohen, who is probably best known for *It's Alive* and *It Lives Again*, liked to mix his films — horror and otherwise — with other genres but failed as much as he succeeded, as is often the case with these sorts of attempts. *Q* is a classic case of his approach, and deals with the resurrection of an ancient Aztec deity (Quetzalcoatl, the Winged Serpent) in New York, following a series of grisly murders at the hands of blood hungry devotees. Naturally, the cops are on the case, led by Carradine, who is alone in noticing a connection between the killing spree that leaves its victims flayed, and eyewitness sightings of a pterodactyl over New York.

All this is told as a secondary plot to the main one, which has to do with a petty burglar (Moriarty) who stumbles onto the creature's nest high atop New York's Chrysler building. It's really Moriarty's story and character — an obvious antecedent to the sympathetic outlaws of Tarantino's films — that drives the movie forward. In Moriarty, Cohen crafts a humorous retake of that timeless story about the vagrant who tries to rise above his station. It's all done against the backdrop of a creature film, of course, which allows the proceedings to border on parody and excuses those atrocious special effects as part of the fun. Ironically, it's Moriarty, best known as a stone-faced lawyer on TV's *Law & Order*, who really fleshes out his character and takes the film to places where it wouldn't otherwise go. You won't quite see him the same way again.



***Q* : the non fan's creature feature.**

Ultimately, this is what makes *Q* worth watching, despite the fact that it's not a great movie. It's the carefree fun of the thing — an endearing lead, a slew of witless criminals and a blimp-sized monster that cruises the New York skies without anyone noticing — that makes me recommend it for viewing, especially for those who don't usually dig horror films.

**-Rod Gudino**

## Creature From the Bleak Lagoon

Godzilla
Starring Matthew Broderick and Jean Reno
Directed by Roland Emmerich
Screenplay by Dean Devlin & Roland Emmerich
Story by Ted Elliot & Terry Rossio and Dean Devlin & Roland Emmerich

In May 97, when word first started spreading that a gi-normous budget version of Godzilla was going into production, two mutually exclusive questions immediately arose: WHY? and WHEN?

WHY? was the cry of die-hard Godzilla fans. For these devotees of Toho Co.'s puppet-show-meets-men-in-tights approach to light-hearted monster movie making, Japan's lizard king had always been a high-camp character, purposely ridiculous, but loveably so. Tradition (to the tune of 22 Godzilla flicks) dictated that taking Godzilla out of the body suit and away from the model train battlegrounds was as blasphemous as replacing 101 cartoon dalmatians with living, breathing ones. It subverted everything that defined the original, to the point where any ties to the newby became nothing more than nominal.

WHEN? was the question being clamoured by pretty much everyone else. The *Godzilla* WHEN? camp was demographically unquantifiable, unless you consider 'children of all ages' to be an economic category (more on that later). Basically, the WHENs were the big screen junkies, the less-than-5-movies-a-year homebodies, and anyone in between. They were any and all average North Americans easily swayed by attractive packaging. As they had done with Godzilla's record-setting predecessor, *Independence*



*Godzilla* '98: safe, silly and childish.

*Day*, director Roland Emmerich and producer Dean Devlin were determined to make their monster movie must-see material. To accomplish this, they had to take the creature away from its cult following and make it a leader on the campaign trail.

They won votes everywhere. Bulwarked by hands-down the finest theatrical teasers in the history of film, the hype they built around *Godzilla* was certainly hard earned. Alas, it was not well deserved. *Godzilla* was a crushing disappointment of a movie. At the heart of it all, simply put: size was the matter.

Backed by the success of *Independence Day*, Emmerich and Devlin were guaranteed the bucks to build the perfect beast. Standing at a height of 400 official feet (and still pretty intimidating with just its feet), the Godzilla that they plunked down in the centre of New York City certainly looked every bit the part of a believable, realistic, resurrected dinosaur.

Resurrected dinosaur? Now, where had we seen one of those before? *Godzilla*'s shortcomings had nothing to do with how tall the thing was, or how real it looked; the problem was that Emmerich and Devlin didn't do anything with their city-smashing monster that hadn't already been done — and done just as insipidly — in the tail end of *The Lost World*.

Emmerich and Devlin had the right idea: they wanted to set Godzilla loose in the heart of a busy urban metropolis; they wanted to make a disaster movie. *Godzilla* promised the monster mash in The Big Apple but got bogged down by Hollywood accountants looking for lowest common denominator programming: family viewing.

The result: *Godzilla* was safe. *Godzilla* was silly. *Godzilla* was childish. Now, the lizard can be forgiven for being a (big) baby, but Emmerich and Devlin should have given the public more credit. Photocopying is old technology, and the originals always look better, if only for getting there first. Whether the original in this case is *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* or *Jurassic Park* is irrelevant. For a beast big enough to wear size 5-subway-car shoes, *Godzilla* should have forged its own path instead of walking in the footsteps of its prehistoric predecessors.

How ironic, really, that *Godzilla* was not a Godzilla movie for Godzilla fans. It certainly saves the WHYs the trouble of disowning it. As for the WHENs: Hollywood got what we paid for. We wanted the bomb to be tested; now we have to take responsibility for the results.

**-Gary Butler**

## A Hacker in the Rye

### The Butcher Boy
Starring Stephen Rea, Fiona Shaw and Eamonn Owens
Directed by Neil Jordan
Written by Neil Jordan and Patrick McCabe

In a small town in Ireland in the early 1960s, 12-year-old Francie Brady (Owens) and his best friend Joe (Alan Boyle) live in a fantasy world of comic books, cowboys and indians and a thrilled but confused awareness of the drawing atomic age. Francie is a spirited but troubled kid; his father (Rea) is the town drunk and his mother (Aisling O'Sullivan) has a hold on reality that is tenuous to say the least. Deciding to put an end to her life seems to be a pretty commonplace occurrence. Early in the film, we watch her casually exchange suppertable dialogue with her son who moments before interrupted her during a suicide attempt in the kitchen.

It's scenes like these, by turns blackly comical and savagely tragic, that make the substance of *The Butcher Boy* by far director Neil Jordan's most grown up film to date. For the record, *The Butcher Boy* is not a horror film, though there is enough of that within it to warrant a mention. Jordan has often been lauded for his highly original scripts, partly because he has a tendency to approach his stories unusually, a point which is evident here as well as in the director's straight out horror films (notably *The Company of Wolves* and *Interview With The Vampire*).

It turns out that the harsh realities of home life and the fear of atomic annihilation are nothing to the wholesale evil which Francie has come to associate with Ms. Nugent (Shaw), a pretentious neighbour who in turn fears and despises the young boy. With impassioned simplicity, Francie comes to blame Ms. Nugent for the ills that befall him, including the eventual death of each of his parents and, more importantly, the rejection he suffers at the hands of his only friend. Alone and displaced, Francie balloons his fictional world to fantastic proportions, bifurcated by a worldly version of the Virgin Mary (Sinead O'Conner) and the hateful presence of Ms. Nugent, whom he eventually decides to murder.

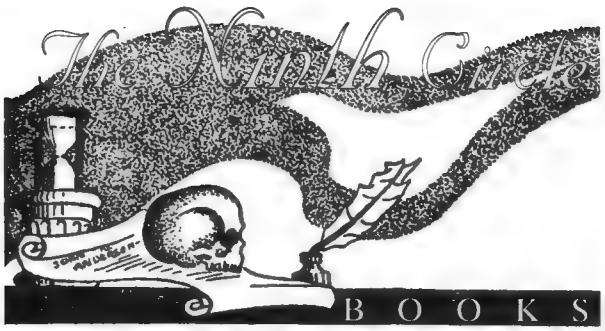
A parable told in the language of a child, *The Butcher Boy* resembles a film called *The Reflecting Skin* which came out about seven years ago and also told a somewhat macabre story using the reference points of a young boy's imagination. We have a similar kind of approach here, evidenced especially in the scenes in which Francie comforts his father, now dead, by keeping the flies off his face, or listens attentively as the local butcher demonstrates how pigs are killed. Later, Francie applies the butcher's technique during the Charles Manson-like bloodbath which earns him his title. And then there's the hiding of the body, which is gruesome but also very funny — almost as if it could only have been conceived by a child.

The film snagged Jordan this year's Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear Award for Best Director and an honourable mention for Eamonn Owens. In this case, we feel bound to not only support the hype, but declare it to be Jordan's finest work to date. Currently on video.

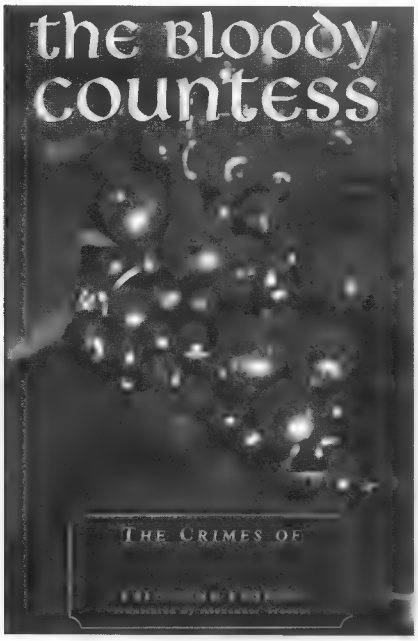
**-Emma Anderson**



Eamonn Owens is *The Butcher Boy*.

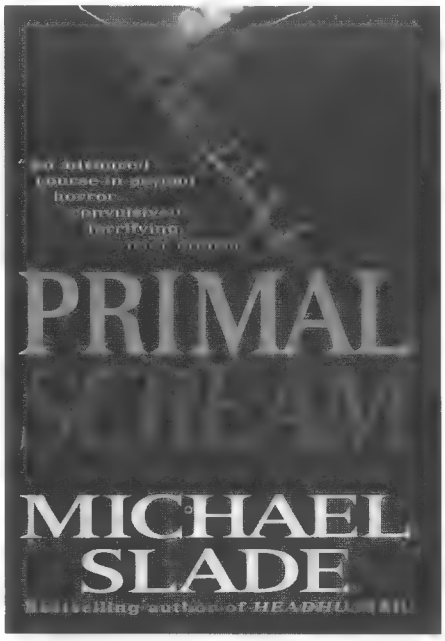



# Bathory's Bloody History
## Bloch's Pulp Revisited
## Second-Rate Scream










### The Bloody Countess
*Valentine Penrose*
**Creation Books**

Vanity, thy name is woman. That rather controversial phrase sprang to mind several times while reading about the exploits of the Countess Erzébet Bathory, who before her death in 1614 had brutally tortured and murdered over 650 girls for the sake of preserving her youthful beauty.

Bathory's savage crimes are well documented in *The Bloody Countess*, originally published in 1970 and recently re-released by Creation Books. Written by Valentine Penrose and translated from the original French by Alexander Trocchi, the book goes to great pains to piece together the scraps of information available about Bathory's life.

All sources are detailed and speculation on the author's part is kept to a minimum; what emerges is a historically accurate account of a Hungary plunged in the middle of the Dark Ages and civil war. All of which gives the book a somewhat dry, textbook-like feel. Some of the passages are fairly uninteresting, while others are downright confusing, especially since the author is fond of tossing out a myriad of similar names and events in an order which is non-chronological for the most part. One can't help but feel that much of Penrose's writing flair may have been lost in the translation.

But what the book lacks in titillating prose, it more than makes up for in its macabre content. There is no doubt in Penrose's mind that Bathory was pure evil; a butcher who died unrepentant, confident that her actions were not only justified, but her noble right. Enmeshed in a world of black magic and surrounded by sorceresses, dwarfs, and servants with names like Dorkó, Bathory's exploits are the stuff horror writers dream of.

Unfortunately, her savage lust for blood was only too true. A succession of young girls, ages 10 to 20, virgins and mostly peasants were beaten, flayed, had their faces ironed, hot coals shoved down their throats, pins stuck under their fingernails, mouths sewn shut, their vaginas burned with an open flame and their fingers cut off. Her victims too would eventually be drained of their blood so that Bathory could bathe in it, believing that it would keep her skin soft and milky white.

Sometimes, her tortures were even more elaborate. Most fascinating of all is the account of a clockwork 'Iron Virgin.' In the shape of a naked woman, the device would mechanically extend its arms and hold the unfortunate girl while a series of daggers protruded from its breasts and impaled her.

The final chapters, detailing Bathory's downfall under a newly united Hungary, are the more interesting to read, particularly the political intrigues which lead to her stay of execution and perpetual imprisonment in her own castle. There she spent the last three years of her life alone, walled-up in her room with only a mirror for company, watching her blood starved skin wrinkle with age and time. A true vampire story.

**-Pedro Cabezuelo**

### Flowers from the Moon and Other Lunacies
*Robert Bloch*
**Arkham House**

Robert Bloch has been an undisputed master of the short horror story dating back to another era. He belongs to that canon of writers who lived off of weekly deadlines and cranked stuff out by the pound; people like William Nolan, Chuck Beaumont —

Ray Bradbury was there too — and, of course, Harlan Ellison. But Bloch was also a daddy to those guys; it's probably closer to the truth to say that he was successor to the late, great H.P. Lovecraft. Like Lovecraft, Bloch took over and perfected his own brand of pulp fiction, with a long, illustrious career in the pages of *Weird Tales* and *Strange Stories* magazines (later in *Rogue*), many of those stories since lost.

*Flowers from the Moon and Other Lunacies* aims to cast a new light on some of that material, with stories going back over fifty years when Bloch was a budding writer of just twenty years of age (when he wrote the lead-off story called The Druidic Doom) right through to 1961, clearly the time period when he was most lucid with the pen (Philtre Tip). The material here is reminiscent of the tautly written, suspense narratives that typified the age of the shudder pulps, when story was boss and output was ultimately disposable. The hungry edge and transparent style of those stories is obvious, even from the earliest samples; besides The Druidic Doom, they include Fangs of Vengeance and Death Is An Elephant, both set in the same circus. In Soul Proprietor, Bloch makes an easy story about a classified which advertises a soul for sale while Black Bargain tells the story about a man stalked by his own shadow.

Bloch has gone on to pen some of the most memorable horror we've seen this century, thanks to that liquid style and an endless supply of tight narrative hooks and punchy stories. He made Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper a classic of the genre and while that story is absent from this volume, nineteen others benefit from the writer's unmistakable touch. A must for the aspiring genre writer, the Bloch enthusiast or the discerning reader. Also includes The Man Who Told The Truth, Satan's Phonograph, Wine of the Sabbat, He Waits Beneath the Sea and Death Has Five Guesses, among others.

**-Emma Anderson**

## Primal Scream

*Michael Slade*

**Viking/Penguin**

Tough Canadian cops chasing tough Canadian serial killers through the tough Canadian wilderness: *Primal Scream* is *one* tough read, all right. Psycho Thriller. Qu'est-ce que c'est? Basically, it's the dubious 'genre' that has risen to popularity in the wake of the deserved success of works like Philip Kerr's *A Philosophical Investigation*, Michael Connelly's *The Concrete Blonde* and especially Thomas Harris' *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Supply and demand, of course, has a direct effect on value. What is it that makes the idea of the RCMP being a hardier, savvier FBI so hard to buy? And what is it that makes the price of sicko-sexual suspense so low, completely debasing the currency? *Primal Scream* is high on testosterone, no bones about it. And there are plenty of those to go around, too.

A bizarre amalgamation of six-or-so seemingly incompatible styles, this book fails in trying too hard to be too many things at once: an ongoing survey of little-known Canadian history (ingeniously essential to the plot); an airy-fairy examination of the roots of sexual fetishes and phobias (essential insofar as justifying the title, and the author's perversity); an unsettling pastiche of Sherlock Holmes (essentially elementary, as in s-i-m-p-l-e); and, of course, an admittedly original serial killer story (in essence, a yin/yang competition between "The Headhunter" and "The Decapitator" — believe it).

How ironic, this congestion, in light of the fact that the author's name, Michael Slade, is a pseudonym for a tag team of real-life defence lawyers (speciality: insanity), which goes some way to accounting for the jaggedness of both style and flow in this, the duo's sixth novel. But while *Primal Scream* is mercifully low on jargon, it's ridiculously high on camp -- too bad it's the all-mosquitoes kind.

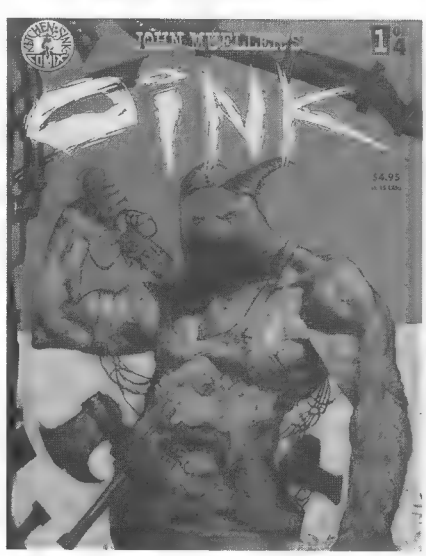
Slade's simultaneous commitment to jocularity and jocks just doesn't mix well. The most feral member of the Mounties is nicknamed Mad Dog, actual surname Rabidowski (think about it...). The urgent, in-your-face narrative describing a Grizzly attack finds the protagonist suffering from "bearanoia." And it's suggested that She Ain't Pretty (She Just Looks That Way) by The Northern Pikes is the greatest rock and roll song of all time!

Please, Mike: leave the jokes to the comedians. While you're at it, leave the tough talk to the Americans. And did you have to break out the snowshoes north of the parallel!?! *Primal Scream* had potential; if only it had a strong sense of identity. How quintessentially Canadian; how howlingly second-rate.

**-Gary Butler**

# BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

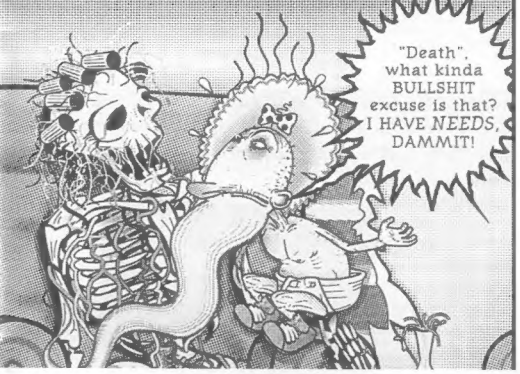
*by Pedro Cabezuelo*




Horror in comics continues to be a popular, albeit minor, staple of the industry with several companies devoting at least a couple of titles to the weird and gruesome. Kitchen Sink Press is no stranger to the macabre with titles such as *Black Hole* and *From Hell* (more on that in a future issue) — some of the best comics, horror or otherwise, ever. With these titles, they continue to explore different avenues of the genre, aiming more to disturb than terrify.

April saw the return of **Oink** in a brand new miniseries titled *Blood and Circus*. Writer and artist John Mueller continues his story of a post-apocalyptic pig-man begun in 1996's acclaimed *Oink: Heaven's Butcher*. This time out, our porcine protagonist gets captured by a group of cannibalistic amputees aching for some barbecued pork chops. Owing a great debt to splatter and *The Road Warrior*, the comic's rather mundane story is enhanced greatly by Mueller's eerie visuals. The painted artwork presents the reader with many disturbing images, not the least of which is Oink himself, an abnormally large pig-man with beady, brutish eyes. Overall, he's a great alternative to the big-boobed-bad-bitch bombardment of books out there, although his stories are too fast a read. Hopefully future issues will have more meat and less fat.

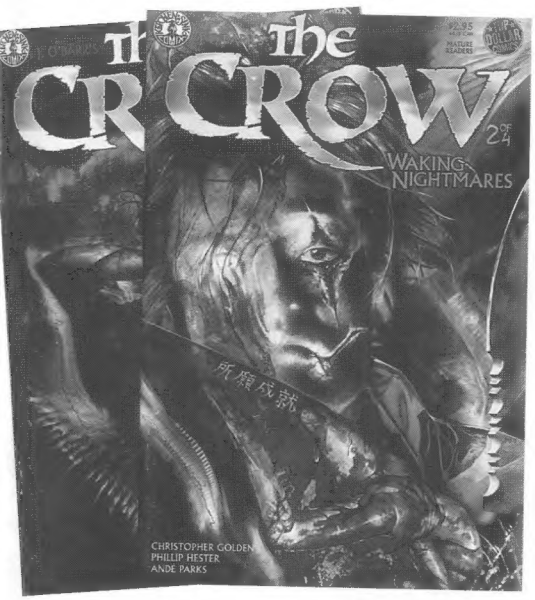
April also saw the first issue of computer cartoonist Mark Landman's **Blue Loco**. This offbeat book is made up of five stories, three of which incorporate computer graphics and a dizzying array of colour (think *Toy Story* on acid for the printed page). Despite these technological treats, the stories that stand out are two pencilled black and whites, one about a mutating brain surgeon, the other about a 67-year-old baby. Both manage to be




**Old Baby accosts unattentive parent.**

funny, off the wall, disturbing, and highly entertaining at the same time.

Kitchen Sink also recently concluded (with Top Dollar Comics) the latest **Crow** miniseries *Waking Nightmares*. Written by Christopher Golden with art by Phillip Hester and Ande Parks, this four issue series eschews the more traditional gothic horror

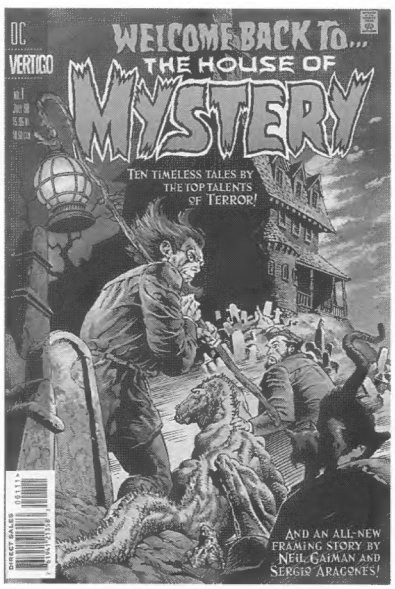


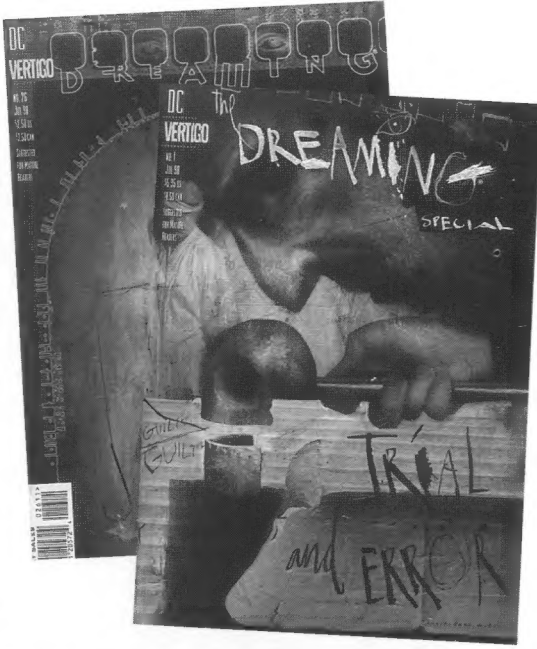

overtones in previous series in favour of John Woo, complete with Chinatown setting. As a result, new Crow Mark Leung walks around with trench coat, sunglasses and gun rather than adopting the usual persona of the goth outcast. More action than horror, the series is nevertheless intelligently written with Hester and Parks' artwork suiting the story's style perfectly.

Let's turn the tap off for a while to climb the steps of high horror from DC Comic's Vertigo imprint. Vertigo continues to produce some of the industry's more sophisticated and thought-provoking material. May saw a celebration of sorts for two of DC's longest running horror characters, the popular **Cain and Abel**. For those not familiar with the feuding siblings, Cain and Abel used to host their own anthologies during the seventies, *House of Mystery* and *House of Secrets*, respectively. With the cancellation of those titles in the early eighties, the two languished in limbo until Alan Moore resurrected them for his *Swamp Thing* run, playing up the angle of Cain continuously murdering his brother for all eternity to great horrific effect.

Since then the characters could regularly be seen in *The Sandman* and its follow-up, *The Dreaming*. May's issue of *The Dreaming* (#26) set the stage for the festivities with a tale dedicated to the battling brothers. In *Restitution*, Abel finally snaps and hits Cain back, which, if you're up on your Genesis, is a mortal sin. Abel is left to face the consequences of his action. Writer Caitlin R. Kiernan and Duncan Fegredo capture the tragedy, horror, and humour which define Cain and Abel's appearances perfectly.

And for long time fans there's a special heartwarming surprise on the last page. As if in an act of revenge, Cain hogs the spotlight in *Welcome Back to the House of Mystery* which reprints ten tales from the series' heyday. Half-expecting these stories to be cliched and uninspiring, it was quite a surprise to find some gems. *Nightmare*, about a lonely little girl who finds comfort and horror in a magical world, is poignant without being melodramatic, and *The Demon Within* is a great allegorical tale about a couples' unrelenting efforts to prevent their son from mischievously turning into a demon and embarrassing them.




The prize, however, goes to the wonderfully titled *Oh Mom! Oh Dad! You've Sent Me Away To Summer Camp And I'm So Sad!*, about a wheelchair-bound boy who's torn between siding with his bullying campmates or the bullying counsellors who may or may not be aliens! There are nevertheless several predictable and mediocre tales along the way but they hold their own and the artwork is exceptional, particularly that of horror maestro Berni Wrightson. The new framing sequence by Neil Gaiman and Sergio Aragones also adds to the fun. This may very well be a series which requires some re-evaluation.

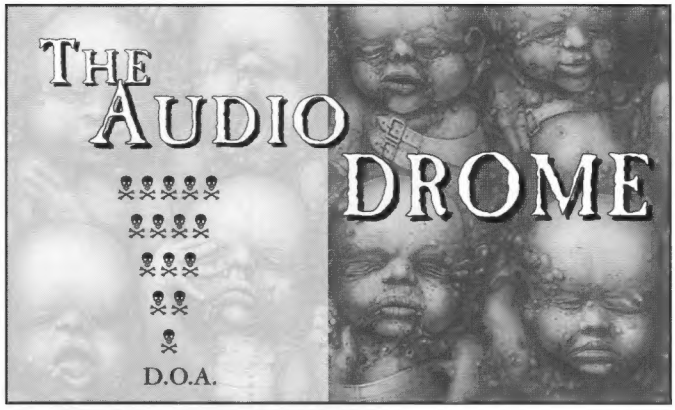
Finally there's *The Dreaming: Trial and Error* in which Cain is finally put on trial for the murder(s) of his brother with unpredictable results. The art by Brian Apthorp is fine but it's the story by *Swamp Thing* co-creator Len Wein which really shines. It's nice to see that Wein can still tell an entertaining story, nicely balancing the humour with the horror and making this one of the few specials worthy of the extra pages and price.




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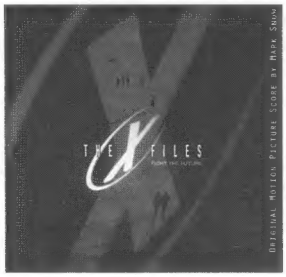






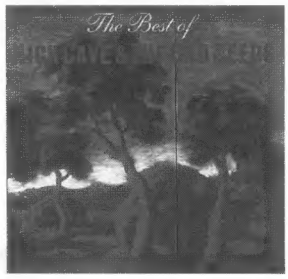
**RIVEN THE SOUNDTRACK**
**Robyn Miller**
**Virgin**

The mystery shrouded five islands of Riven are captured in spirit on this album, straight from the mind of the man who gave sound to Myst. And even if video games are not your thing, the dark, sweeping dreamscape which Miller forges to represent the different facets of a world that only exists on digital is worth exploring. Overwhelmingly ambient more than spooky but Riven still has its delicious moments of impenetrable obscurity. ☠☠☠☠




**THE X-FILES: THE SCORE**
**Mark Snow**
**Elektra/Warner**

They say Mark Snow has one of the best jobs on television, scoring the music for two of the spookiest shows on the tube, namely, *X-Files* and *Millennium*. The composer has made a great gig of the job, making the theme for *The X-Files* eerie, melodic and memorable at the same time, while the show's score is comprised of musical expressions of awe, mystery and terror. The X-Files' inevitable transition onto the big screen, however, has demanded that Snow change his tune; rather than creating mood, the music here is loud and bombastic, the kind that has thundering helicopters and high speed chases written all over it. You know the type. Ultimately, the success of the movie is going to dictate whether this becomes a sought after item, but from our vantage point it seems worthy of recommendation only for the serious fans. ☠☠




**NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS**
**The Best of Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds**
**Reprise/Warner**

First and foremost a story-teller, Nick Cave has fashioned a career from a host of sallow and melancholy narratives that have elicited comparisons to anyone from Leonard Cohen to Flannery O' Conner and influenced people like Chris Carter and Wes Craven. Part of the reason can be found in this collection of riveting song-stories. Among them, the diabolical schemer of Red Right Hand who has the power to grant any wish at a bloody price; the southern preacher who articulates a warped logic against a primal rumble in Tupelo; the righteous con on death row in Mercy's Seat, and ultimately, the swarthy and complex figure of Jesus, the man of sorrows whom many of these metaphorical characters anticipate. Fictions involving love and death are found on Henry Lee (with PJ Harvey) and Where The Wild Roses Grow, the latter a restrained duet between a murderer and his dead beloved. From the dramatic flourish of early tales like The Carny to the spiritual calm of (Are You) The One That I've Been Waiting For?, Cave paints a myth-mural of secular spirituality, loss, chaos, death, retribution and redemption. Stunning and occasionally chilling. ☠☠☠☠☠




**THE MONSTER MOVIE MUSIC ALBUM**
**City of Prague Philharmonic**
**Silva America/KOCH**

With the arrival of *Godzilla* to the big screen, there is some opportunity for its younger sibling to share in the limelight. And why not? *Godzilla* is, after all, a product of a long line of creature features from the big (and sometimes small) screen dating back to eighty or so years of creature cinema. The Monster Movie Album aims to bring together some of the more notable appearances under one disc, including Ghidra, King Kong, giant bees and crabs (from Mysterious Island), dinosaurs and other Creatures the World Forgot. Some of this music has since reached legendary status, as with Max Steiner's energetic score for *King Kong* and Akira Ifukube's finale for the original *Godzilla*, both re-recorded to a full and contemporary sound by the City of Prague's Philharmonic Orchestra. Also includes Theodore Rex, The Land Before Time and One Million years B.C. ☠☠☠☠



**GROOVIE GHOULIES**
**Re-Animation Festival**
**Lookout Records**

The Ramones meet the Living Dead on Groovie Ghoulies' fourth release from Lookout Records. Titled *Re-Animation Festival*, the album articulates best the Sacramento, California-based band's Monster Mash approach to three chord rock and roll with Halloween faves like Graveyard Girlfriend, Chupacabra and Zombie Crush. The sound thins on about half of the disc but the other half redeems it. Punky and cool. ☠☠☠




**APOCALYPTICA**
**Inquisition Symphony**
**Mercury/PolyGram**

Even the best heavy metal music has tended to be a comic book affair with its charade of menacing lyrics overtop the most aggressive form of guitar music imaginable. Somehow, the threat suggested in the words and the album cover art always fell to the wayside by the simple fact that most bands just tried too hard. Alas, we come to Apocalyptica, a group of Swedish cellists who understate the situation and, in doing so, distil the black soul out of the music to give it voice in a startlingly unique setting. Inquisition Symphony revisits the interests of the group's self titled classical/metal debut with tracks from Metallica, among them For Whom The Bell Tolls, Fade To Black and One, interspersed with material from Sepultura (Refuse /Resist, Inquisition Symphony), Pantera (Domination) and Faith No More (From Out of Nowhere). Particularly striking are the slower pieces, notably their cover of Metallica's Nothing Else Matters, which drips black melancholy to achieve a sullen, lasting beauty. Also includes a few original pieces, written specifically for cellos, which capture the angry thunder of thrash, speed and other forms of black metal. ☠☠☠☠

**SLAYER**
**Diabolus In Musica**
**American/Sony**

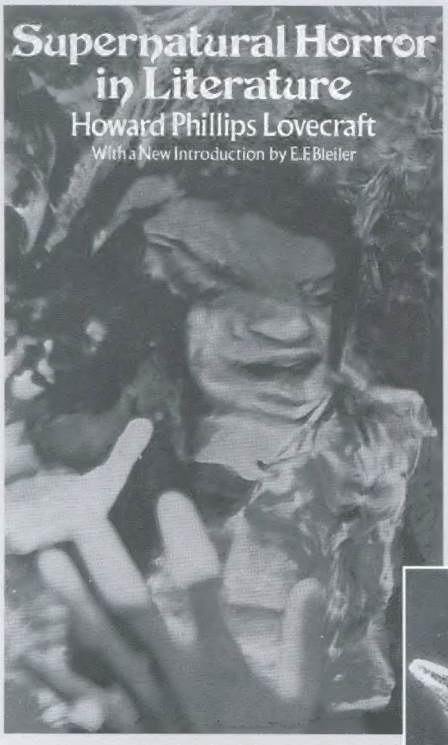
Slayer has had a long, bleak affair with themes of death and decay, having pretty much taken the torch from Black Sabbath some ten years back. Like most metal, they present a kind of take it or leave it proposition for the average listener; either you like this stuff or you don't. The former camp can take comfort in the fact that these guys have scarcely mellowed their gig, while those who favour the latter group can rest easy with the fact that Slayer looks a lot scarier than they sound. ☠☠☠

# Supernatural Horror in Literature

## by H.P. Lovecraft

*(Initially published in 1939)*
*Dover Publications Inc., 1973*

Despite the comprehensive, cosmic mythology that H.P. Lovecraft developed in his career as a professional writer, he only wrote one non-fiction book. The book (or essay more properly), was commissioned by a friend for the premiere issue of a folio-sized magazine titled *The Recluse*, and appeared there in its first incarnation (1927). The work was soon picked up for serialization by *The Fantasy Fan*, one of the better fantasy magazines of the time, but the publication capsized before Lovecraft could finish the revisions. The final draft, therefore, only appeared two years after the author's death, in 1939, for a memorial volume called *The Outsider and Others*.




Titled *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, the resulting work is not so much an argument about literary horror as it is a comprehensive sweep of the genre from early folk tales, through the gothic period (early, middle and late) and into modern offshoots in America and Britain. As such, it is an exhaustive catalogue of authors and titles indispensable to readers interested in a historical discussion of the genre and/or Lovecraft's influences.

Lovecraft is particularly adept at the task of cataloguing the expanse of literary horror of his time; his interests — like his output — was voluminous, and his knowledge of other people's work was encyclopedic. His bias, however, was clearly in the vein of exploitation horror, which makes his work particularly relevant for our time.

For Lovecraft, the horror story (or weird tale as he preferred to call it), was rooted in a profound interest of what he called "the morbidly unnatural." These stories, he argued, eschewed notions of idealism, didacticism and naturalism in favour of exploiting the human primal emotion of fear, specifically the fear of the unknown. Truly horrific stories were, according to Lovecraft, single-minded in their pursuit of this one elementary principle which would elicit in the reader "a profound sense of dread," made possible through a simulated "contact with the unknown." Like Edgar Allan Poe before him, he believed the weird tale to be something greater than the sum of its parts; its real success lay outside the mechanical requirements of plot and atmosphere — rather, it could only be secured through the emotional intensity of a story's least mundane point.

"The true weird tale," wrote Lovecraft, "has more than secret murder, bloody bones or a sheeted form of clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain — a malign and particular suspension of defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space."

Not surprisingly, Lovecraft devoted an entire chapter to Poe, whom he credited as being the first to mature the weird tale out of its prosaic adolescence and into the adulthood of pure exploitation. His overriding view of fiction as an expression of sense experience by an impersonal author, paved the way for the golden age of horror pulp that still defines the approach of blockbuster authors like Clive Barker, Stephen King, Peter Straub and Dean Koontz. For this reason primarily, the book has enduring appeal to those who have understood Lovecraft's fiction as an isolated phenomenon.

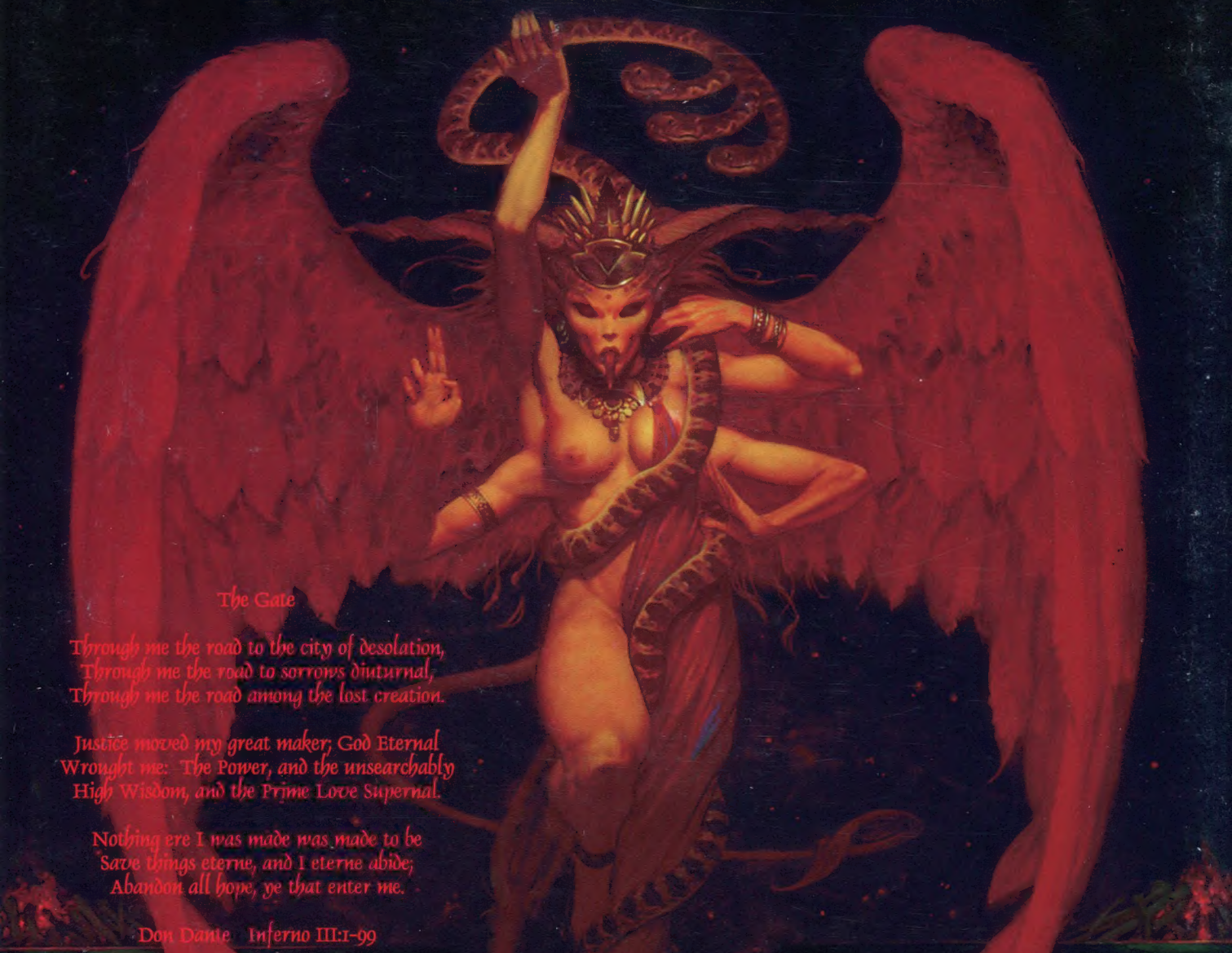
**-Rod Gudino**



**Portrait of Lovecraft by J.K. Potter.**

# INFERNO

## BATTLES OF THE ABYSS



The Gate

*Through me the road to the city of desolation,*
*Through me the road to sorrows diuturnal,*
*Through me the road among the lost creation.*

*Justice moved my great maker; God Eternal*
*Wrought me: The Power, and the unsearchably*
*High Wisdom, and the Prime Love Supernal.*

*Nothing ere I was made was made to be*
*Save things eterne, and I eterne abide;*
*Abandon all hope, ye that enter me.*

Don Dante Inferno III:1-99

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